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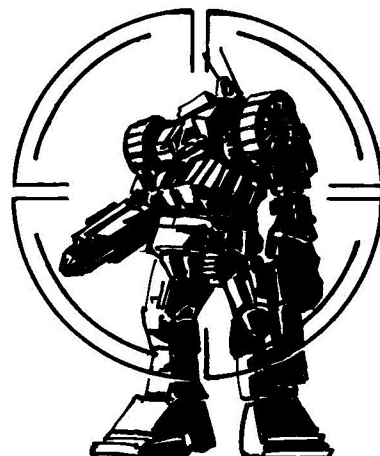
The Magazine of Combat in the 31st Century



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The Magazine of Combat in the 31st Century

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BattleTechnology

The Magazine of Combat in the 31st Century

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August 3027

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About the Cover:

A lightning strike by the 2nd Kearny Highlanders spearheaded a snap raid by Liao forces onto the Davion world of Corella early in July, culminating in the Battle of Kilgour. Critics of Prince Hanse Davion's policies contend that the war games and maneuvers recently launched are wasteful of precious war materials and risk triggering confrontations such as Kilgour. See page 16 of this issue, "What Is Hanse Up To?"

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OPENING SHOTS

Welcome to BattleTechnology Magazine.

It has been said of the 31st Century that human life is cheap, while the combat machines they pilot are not.

Certainly this is true in military terms. In the brutal, blood and steel accounting system of modern combat, regimental commanders would gladly sacrifice a battalion of infantry in order to bring down a single BattleMech. Those ponderous machines which have been termed Kings of the Battlefield are virtually irreplaceable, priceless in any real sense of the word. One study suggests that new 'Mechs are being assembled in the various surviving industrial complexes of the Inner Sphere at a rate which only just barely surpasses their attrition rate in combat. The majority of 'Mechs encountered on the battlefield are centuries old, literally heirlooms which have been passed down from generation to generation within single families or, in many cases, within particular regimental companies.

And of course, the humans who take these machines into battle can *always* be replaced.

Or can they?

There are aspects of flesh and blood and spirit which can never be assumed by the purely mechanical frames of combat machines, however sophisticated. The brotherhood which binds fighting men and women together, the belonging, the training and experience, the *esprit de corps* which makes a company more than an armed mob—these are intangibles which go beyond the statistics of 'Mech tonnage and combat firepower. These comprise the *human element* of spirit and tradition and fighting will which make it possible for a David to triumph over a Goliath...or a pair of *Wasps* to take on a *Rifleman* and win.

Even today, the human element cannot be lightly dismissed.

When such qualities cease to make any difference in the balance of life—or death—then Man as a species will be ready for the scrap heap, replaced by the machines which were previously his servants.

It is this human element which makes a magazine such as BattleTechnology possible. Any magazine designed for MechWarriors which dealt solely in the statistics of 'Mech against 'Mech would have all the flavor and color of a technical manual. It is the human element—with all its fear and hope, striving and failure and success—which adds the fire.

In this and future issues of BattleTechnology, MechWarriors and other interested parties will find what we hope is a balanced range of columns and feature articles. Subjects will include anything of interest to warriors, techs, and mercenaries, from the politics of the Great Houses, to new 'Mech designs, from tactical reviews of historical battles to useful modifications to 'Mechs or equipment, from columns dealing with potential mercenary employers to detailed descriptions of worlds across the explored Galaxy.

But in this endeavor, we must rely on the human element. BattleTechnology maintains its principal editorial offices on the small world of Exeter, within the boundaries of the Federated Suns, and satellite offices within the territory of each of the other Houses. We rely on the human element—the men and women who serve as techs, as mercenary soldiers, as MechWarriors across the realm of Human space—to provide us with the material you see in these pages.

Combat experiences. Tactical evaluations of battles or campaigns which you have experienced. BattleMech designs or revisions or modifications which you have used, or had used against you. Songs, poems, or art which speak of the human element in a universe of death and blood and machines—and of life and hope in such a universe.

BattleTechnology hopes to present all of these and more. But we need your help and participation.

We need the human element.

BattleTechnology is, after all, *your* story...

William H. Keith Jr.
- 3027 -

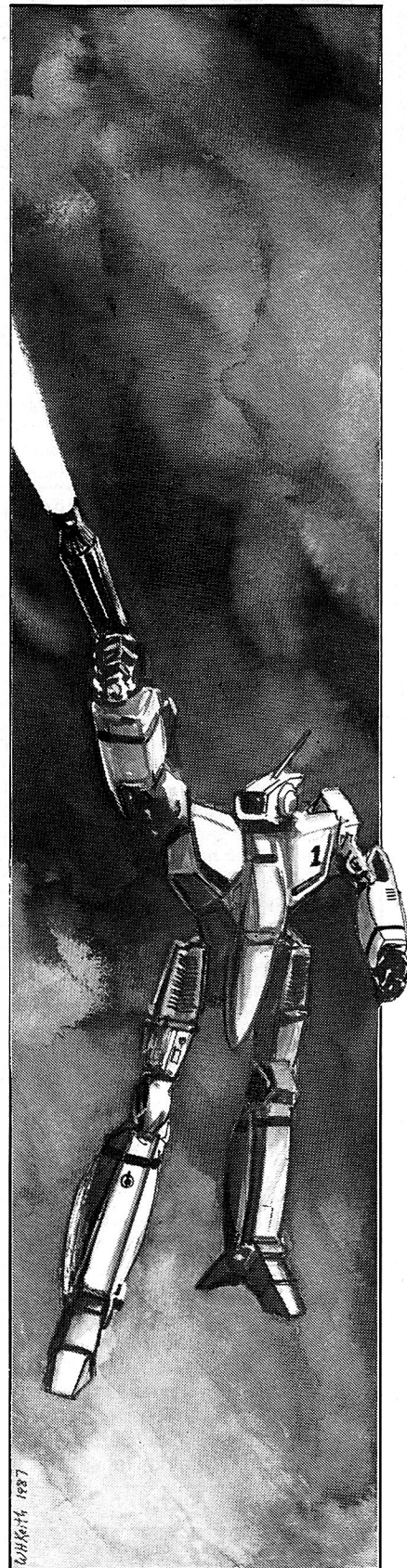
STANDARD TIMES AND DATES

Unless otherwise noted, all times given in this issue are Terran Synchronised Time (abbreviated TST). TST relates the time on any world to a traditional 24-hour clock set to the rising and setting of the local sun or suns. TST's variable "hours" may be as much as ten minutes shorter or longer than a standard, or "metric" hour, depending on the world's actual rotation.

The 24-hour clock divides the local day into 24 equal periods, with 1200 hours corresponding to local noon. Thus, 0900 hours is mid-morning, while 1500 hours is mid-afternoon.

All dates use the universal Terran standard calendar (abbreviated TC), which divides Earth's year into 12 months or 365.25 days, as measured by standardized metric time rather than the variable TST. TC dates are related to the current date, at 0° longitude (Greenwich), on Terra, and will have nothing to do with the seasons or local dates of worlds other than Earth.

This premier issue of BattleTechnology is dated August, 3027.



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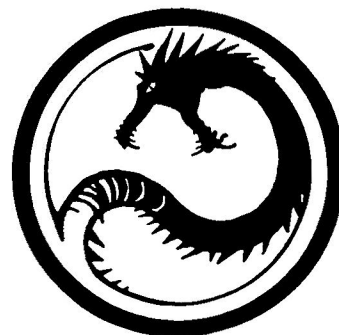
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Hiring Hall

Leopold Ransom: Duke of Alcyone

Reader surveys indicate that fully 32.6% of *BattleTechnology's* readers are mercenary warriors, either as members of established mercenary combat units serving one or another of the great houses, or as freelance warriors-for-hire in such diverse services as bounty hunters and personal body guards for important government or corporate officials.

As a special service to its mercenary leaders then, *BattleTechnology* introduces this column designed to apprise the magazine's readers of mercenary employment opportunities throughout the Inner Sphere and beyond. Each column in future issues will feature a particular potential employer, ranging from the Great Houses of the Successor States themselves to wealthy or powerful individuals, corporations, or institutes which periodically require soldiers-for-hire.

A three-letter coding system has been developed to rate each employer reviewed in this column. Each letter, ranging from A (very good) to Z (very bad) provides insight into possible advantages or disadvantages associated with hiring out to the employer in question. Note that the same code is presented in the companion *BattleTechnology* column, *World Book*.

The areas rated through this code are:

NEED: How frequently does the employer require mercenaries? Code values of A through G indicate a nearly continual need for mercenary forces of various types. Values of U through Z suggest that mercenary openings are relatively rare.

PAY: How well does the employer pay? Code values of A through G indicate above-average pay scales. Values of U through Z indicate poor pay, or a history of noncompliance with mercenary contracts.

CONDITIONS: What are the usual conditions under which mercenaries work? Values of A through G generally indicate relatively good conditions—access to recreational or R&R facilities, service on an Earthlike world, or “soft tickets” such as ceremonial guard duty or providing escort for noble functionaries at court. Values of U through Z suggest generally bad or unpleasant conditions, such as service at an

isolated outpost far from recreational facilities, guard duty at a remote prison or forced labor facility, or a hitch on a world with an unusually hostile environment.

Numerous factors are taken into account in calculating each code value. Naturally, contract openings, pay, and conditions under the same employer may vary tremendously depending on circumstances or changes unreported to *BattleTechnology* since the basic research was done. These code values are intended as guidelines in the presentation of a readers' service only. *BattleTechnology* assumes no responsibility, written or implied, for damages, costs, or casualties incurred through service to mercenary employers screened in this column..

Alsun II, “Alcyone”
Rating Code: B/J/M

SYSTEM OVERVIEW

The world listed as “Alcyone” on most Federated Suns star charts is not the same as the classical Alcyone, brightest star of the cluster of young, hot, blue white stars known as the Pleiades. The Alcyone of the Pleiades is, of course—given that cluster's extremely young age—planetless, though it is under close observation from research stations circling other stars of the cluster, Electra, Meia, and Merope.

The world Alcyone lies at two thirds' the distance of the Pleiades Cluster from Sol, close to the Davion systems of Redfield, Daniels, and Stein's Folly and near the Liao border. The system was discovered by Captain Alfred Daniels of the Terran Survey Ship *Seeker* in 2214. The single habitable world was named by Daniels after his daughter, Alcyone Daniels. The fact that the system appears to lie along a straight line running from Sol to the Pleiades on two-dimensional star charts is probably coincidence. Alcyone's star is a main sequence K0 sun invisible from Sol. It is listed on navigational ephemerides as NSC E 4-008, 332, and is called Alsun or “Al's Sun” by the natives. Alcyone is formally designated as Alsun II.

Alcyone is rated as an Earthlike world. Possessed of a terrestrial ecosystem and a standard oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere, it supports a population of several hundred million. The world has been repeatedly raided by Liao warfleets during the past several centuries and suffered heavily during the genocidal campaigns of the First and Second Successor State Wars. Numerous of Alsun II's cities have been destroyed and never rebuilt, or they remain inhabited but show extensive signs of heavy war damage. Alcyone is marginally self-sufficient in both agriculture and industry. The planet's principal resource is the Hobson-Redeye Factory complex outside of Alcyone's capital of Gratura. The Hobson-Redeye plant manufactures core assemblies for medium and heavy lasers which are in demand throughout the Inner Sphere. Numerous recent Liao raids have been staged for the express purpose of securing stocks of laser core units for Liao manufacturing, or in order to destroy the plant in an effort to hamper House Davion's military effort.

Leopold Ransom: Duke of Alcyone

Alsun II is ruled by Duke Leopold of Alcyone, eleventh of his line in a peerage created in 2807 by Paul Davion. Almost a century later, Alcyone fell to the growing strength of House Liao, though there were whispered hints of treason by the then Duke of Alcyone, Fenris Ransom. Liao Planetary governors ruled Alcyone through the line of Alcyone Dukes, maintaining the line in order to maintain their legitimacy. Only recently, military reversals against House Liao at Redfield and Stein's Folly have resulted in House Davion's securing a firm foothold in this system.

Duke Leopold is not popular with the people he rules. Though he publicly supported Hanse Davion and led the call for reunification with the Federated Suns after Redfield, it is widely rumored that the move was designed to save his own skin, that he is, in fact, still in the pay of Liao agents and secretly working against the interests of the ever-popular Prince Hanse Davion. Davion himself has never acknowledged these rumors, though he has certainly heard them. Publicly, at least, Leopold is Davion's faithful servant, and Davion has confirmed him as the designated ruler of Alsun II. Leopold is also a close supporter and confidant of Prince Davion's brother-in-law, Michael Hasek-Davion, Duke of New Syrtis.

If the general population of Alcyone expected to receive a new ruler with the passing of their Liao overlords, they were disappointed. Public unrest and discontent have

been swelling in recent months, and Duke Leopold has three times declared a planetary state of emergency and employed household troops to crush local insurrections.

MERCENARY TICKETS

Because of the widespread public unrest, Duke Leopold has been unwilling to employ native Alcyonian militia forces for duties such as personal or palace security, or for crowd and riot control. In one of the recent declared emergencies, local militia forces joined rioters in the streets and were put down only when Leopold's own House Guard, the notorious Alcyone House Reds, fired into the crowd, killing thirty and wounding well over two hundred.

With his military and paramilitary resources severely limited, Duke Leopold has recently issued a call for mercenaries to extend the strength and scope of his personal forces. Mercenary duties reported by



BattleTechnology correspondents include escorts of military and government convoys; security details for factories (including the Hobson-Redeye complex), dams, bridges, power stations, or BattleMech repair facilities; and highly prestigious duties as ceremonial guards at the Ducal Palace at Gratura. On July 2nd, 3027 (TC) a 20-man mercenary security force opened fire on a rioting crowd outside the Plaza Concordiat two kilometers from the Ducal Plaza, killing three and wounding seven. The mercenaries were immediately overrun by armed rioters. After a sharp fight in which two more civilians and one mercenary were killed, the security detail was rescued by a detachment of Alcyone Reds and managed to retire to the Palace in good order.

TICKET DETAILS

Though details vary depending on the individual mercenary ticket, the following information describes typical service standards in previous mercenary contracts signed with Duke Leopold of Alcyone.

MISSIONS:

RETAINER

TERRITORIAL CAMPAIGN (riot duty, crowd control)

STATIC DEFENSE (including garrison duty, training cadres, and providing security)

LENGTH OF SERVICE

6 to 9 months

REMUNERATION

Infantry, Armor, Artillery:

Veteran, Elite: Cb 12,000 - 15,000
per squad per week

Regular: Cb 7,000 - 10,000
per squad per week

Green: Cb 2,000 - 5,000
per squad per week

MechWarriors, AeroSpace Pilots:

Veteran, Elite: Cb 1,500
per warrior per week

Regular: Cb 700
per warrior per week

Green: Cb 500
per warrior per week

GUARANTEES

ComStar Intermediary: An agreed-upon sum (generally equal to one third of the entire agreed-upon sum for the mercenary unit for a six-month period, less a 5% fee for ComStar's services) is placed in an escrow account at the ComStar offices in Gratura, Alcyone. Contractual noncompliance by either side is grounds for release of funds to the aggrieved party, after adjudication by a neutral ComStar precentor.

COMMAND RIGHTS

Command will be designated as a House Command, with the unit placed directly under the orders of Baron General Fitzhugh Ransom of the Duke's personal staff. Where possible, the mercenary force will operate independently of local planetary forces but will be responsible to the planetary Staff Command.

Under some circumstances, Duke Leopold retains the right to introduce an integrated command structure, with local planetary troops augmenting or replacing various of the mercenary forces.

TRANSPORT

The mercenary unit is generally expected to provide its own transport to Alcyone. In exceptional cases, the Alcyone Government may arrange for transport at Alcyone's expense.

ASSESSMENT

Though well-rated in need and average to above-average in pay and conditions, mercenaries considering applying for a merc ticket on Alcyone are strongly urged to consider the deteriorating political situation. Indeed, Alcyone's code rating of "M" in the Conditions category is as low as it is principally because of the volatile political situation on the planet. Analysts have predicted that Alcyone's government cannot remain in power without instituting still further draconian measures against the population. Intervention by either Davion or Liao in order to "restore order" is a distinct possibility. Also possible is full-blown armed revolution or all-out civil war. Whether successful or not, any such rising would have as principal targets any offworlder mercenaries in the pay of the hated Duke Leopold.

Further, revolutionary governments tend to show an almost uniform failure to honor mercenary contracts and agreements signed with former governments. The overthrow of Duke Leopold by a popular rising could strand Leopold's mercenaries on a hostile world, leaving them at the mercy of a bloodthirsty mob. Even direct intervention on behalf of the government by Hanse Davion's forces, or those of the Duke of New Syrtis, would likely come too late to help offworlder mercs marooned on Alcyone.

BattleTechnology's recommendation is that mercenary MechWarriors and infantry alike avoid Alcyone. There are other tickets available which pay as well or better—and without the risk of becoming involved in a bloody and bitter civil war.

BattleTechnology Mercenary Employer Assessment

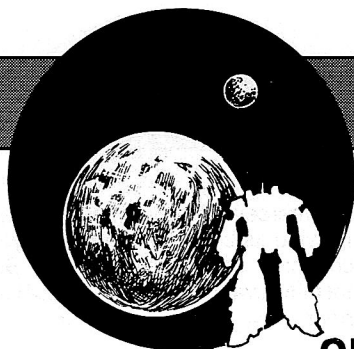
Alsun II: Alcyone

CODE: B/J/M

ASSESSMENT: Negative

Fair pay; high risk





BRIMSTONE: Fiery Hell on the Kurita Frontier

by J. Andrew Keith

STELLAR DATA

Catalog # NSC D 6-507-438 A/B (binary)

Star: Orpheus (A)

Type: F5V

Mass: 1.30 Sol

Luminosity: 2.70 Sol

Radius: 1.24 Sol

Estimated Time Remaining on Main

Sequence: .9 begayear

Star: Eurydice (B)

Type: F7V

Mass: 1.24 Sol

Luminosity: 2.07 Sol

Radius: 1.19 Sol

Estimated Time Remaining on Main

Sequence: .9 begayear

SYSTEM DATA

Binary System Type: Close Double

Planetary System: 9 major bodies, 1 asteroid belt

PLANETARY DATA

Planet V: Weisau

Common Name: Brimstone

Mean Orbital Radius: 2.74 AU

Orbital Eccentricity: .0120

Periastron Orbital Distance: 2.7126 AU

Apastron Orbital Distance: 2.7674 AU

Period: 8.099 standard years

(2,958.1 standard days)

Mass: .5 Earth

Equatorial Diameter: 8322.0 km

Mean Planetary Density: 9.9 g/cm³ (1.8 Earth)

Mean Surface Gravity: 1.1750

Escape Velocity: 12.9 kps

Rotational Period: None; tidal lock with satellite.

Day/night cycle due to mutual orbit with satellite is 55.1 hours.

Axial Inclination: 1°22'14.8"

Atmosphere: Marginal Earth Type

Composition: N₂-83%; O₂-11.3%; H₂O(mean)-0.6%; sulfur and sulfur compounds-2.3%

Hydrographics: 14% of the surface covered by liquid H₂O/H₂SO₄ tainted by other sulfur compounds

Temperature Range (Port Erebus): +10°C. (winter, night) through +66°C. (summer, day). Equatorial temperatures can exceed 125°C.

GENERAL PLANETARY INFORMATION

SATELLITES: 1 (Common name: Fire)

Mean Orbital Radius: 162,298.5 km (39 Brimstone radii); **Eccentricity:** .0204; **Period:** 55.1 hours; **Mass:** .4 Earth; **Equatorial Diameter:** 12,756 km; **Mean Density:** 2.2 g/cm³; **Mean Surface Gravity:** .4 G; **Escape Velocity:** 4.39 kps; **Rotational Period:** None (tidal lock with primary), but day/night cycle alternates by period of 55.1 hours; **Axial Inclination:** 3°18'34.7"; **Atmosphere:** Inhospitable; **Surface Pressure:** .17 atm; **Composition:** various inert gases; **Hydrographic Data:** no liquid hydrosphere on planet.

PLANETOGRAPHY:

Radius: 4161.5 km; **Circumference:** 26,147.508 km; **Total Surface Area:** 217,625,000 sq km; **Land Surface Area:** 187,157,000 sq km; **Inhabited Surface Area:** 1,871,570 sq km.

Surface Topography: Ocean/Sea/Lake 14%; Valley/Rift/Basin 12%; Rising Ground 11%; Lowlands 16%; Steppe/Plain 21%; Low Hills 8%; High Hills 6%; Low Mountains 7%; High Mountains 5%.

FINANCE:

Currency: Altmark (1 altmark = Cb 0.592); **Per Capita Income:** Cb 80; **Gross Domestic Product:** Cb 1.014 billion; **Imports:** Natural Agricultural, Petrochemicals, Armaments, Heavy Manufactured Goods, Light Manufactured Goods; **Principal Sources:** Schirmeck (23%), Senorbi (16%), Valentina (12%), Waldheim (10%), Kaznejov (7%), Budingen (5%), Delacruz (5%); **Exports:** Mineral Ores, Radioactives; **Principal Markets:** Delacruz (23%), Valentina (16%), Waldheim (13%), Altdorf (10%), Schirmeck (5%), Goubellat (3%), Kaznejov (2%).

TRANSPORTATION:

Chief Ports: Port Erebus; **Off-Planet Facilities:** Orbital: none; Deep Space: none; Enclaves: none; **Merchant Fleet:** JumpShips: 0; Freighters: 0; Shuttles: 2; **System Jump Point:** Distance: 19.20 AU; **Travel Time (typical):** 284 hours (11.8 std. days).

HEALTH:

Life Expectancy at Birth: 54 years; **Birth Rate:** (3024) 5%; **Mortality Rate:** (3024) 7%; **Population Growth Rate:** decreasing at 2% per year.

EDUCATION:

Literacy: 12%; **Technicians/100 population:** 4; **Universities:** 3.

ARMED FORCES:

Defense Spending: 30% of GDP; **Military Manpower Potential:** 3,897,774 (35%); **AeroSpace Forces:** Orbital Facilities: 0, Deep Space Facilities: 0, JumpShips: 0, DropShips: 3, AeroSpace Fighters: 6, Escorts: 0, Monitors: 0, Cruisers: 0; **Battalions:** Infantry: 3, Armor: 0, Air: 0, Mech: 0; **Warrior Training Facilities:** none; **Hiring Data:** J/N/T.

PEOPLE:

Population: 12,675,693; **Population Density:** .14 person per sq km; **Urbanization:** 25%; **Ethnic Groups:** Central European (59%), North American (21%), Black (all) (14%); Others (6%); **Languages:** League Anglic (100%); **Religions:** Church of Blake (62%), Protestant Christian Sects (10%); Neo-Buddhist (10%); Universal Catholic Church (10%); **Capitol and Largest City:** Port Erebus; **Other Major Cities:** None.

GOVERNMENT:

Allegiance: Associate World of the Draconis Combine; **Government:** Aristocratic Fief; **Head of State:** Duke Heinrich von Altdorf; **Head of Government:** Freda Massenberg, Ducal Steward for Brimstone; **Local Administrative Districts:** 5.

ECONOMY:

Natural Resources: Ores, Radioactives; **Processed/Manufactured Goods:** None; **Arable Land:** .01%; **Labor Force:** Agricultural (.005%), Industrial (18.75%), Resource Extraction (74.99%), Service: (6.25%).

THE PLANET

The binary star system of Orpheus/Eurydice lies in the cis-Alpheratz region of the Draconis Combine, less than 30 light years from the Federated Suns border. It is a part of the six-planet fiefdom of Duke Heinrich von Altdorf and is important chiefly for the great mineral wealth of Brimstone, the only world even marginally habitable by Man.

Geology: Brimstone is rated at Class XIII on the Eriksson Scale, indicating extremely active geological conditions. Vulcanism and severe seismic stresses result from the massive tidal influence exerted by the planet's satellite (more a twin world than a moon). Tectonic instability has produced a wide variety in surface features, dominated by rugged mountains and high, relatively flat upland plains. The major areas of volcanic activity and mountain-building are centered at the world's equator, where the tidal effect is strongest, but no part of Brimstone is completely free of quakes, volcanic eruptions, sulfurous gas clouds, or lava flows.

Ecology: Native life forms are scant and totally incompatible with Terrestrial types. All species discovered to date are non-motile chemosynthetic types which flourish in the regions of greatest volcanic activity. They extract a variety of chemicals from the soil and metabolize gaseous sulfur dioxide (SO₂), releasing pure oxygen as a by-product. The harsh conditions have limited the feasibility of introducing off-world flora or fauna, except in climate-controlled hydroponics domes in the area around the human settlement. Persons planning to visit the planet should note the marginal qualities of the atmosphere, which is heavily tainted by sulfur compounds. Though breathable, the air is noxious—breathing masks are not essential but are certainly important to comfort and good health—and may occasionally be contaminated with dilute gaseous sulfuric acid. This can have a highly corrosive effect on equipment and people exposed for prolonged periods of time to clouds of this acid steam. Persons bringing 'Mechs or other fusion-powered vehicles to the planet should take precautions against the extreme heat, which complicates ordinary heat buildups out of all recognition.

History: Weisau was discovered by the Fourth Interstellar Survey in 2235 but was never exploited due to the retreat of Terran colonial interests a few years later. In 2640 the Draconis Combine, interested in tapping the recently re-discovered resource potential of the planet, threw it open to settlement. Roughly 100,000 settlers, most of them miners of European and North

American extraction from the Kurita frontiers worlds of Misery and Barlow's Folly, were established in that year at the north polar region that later became known as Port Erebus. The first 60 years of the colony's history were marked by hardship and suffering, and for a time it seemed likely that it would fail entirely. It was during this period that the popular local name "Brimstone" came into common use. Fortunes began to pick up around 2700, and thereafter the colony enjoyed a lengthy period of slow but steady growth.

The misfortunes of the war touched Brimstone during the Second Succession conflict; a Davion invasion force occupied Port Erebus as part of a general offensive in the area. In the Second Battle of Port Erebus in 2858, the Davion forces were dislodged, but Federated Suns General Ferdinand Rico's scorched-planet tactics in the withdrawal period resulted in the loss of 65% of the colony's hydroponics domes. The years of famine and plague that followed were brought under control through massive Combine relief efforts, but it was over 125 years before population figures rose to pre-invasion levels. Almost immediately, in 3015, fighting erupted again in the area with similar results; Brimstone today remains in Kurita hands but suffers from severe limitations in available food supplies and medical facilities. The current population is at its lowest ebb since *before* the Second Succession War.

GENERAL NOTES:

Brimstone is most notable for its high density (still a puzzle to Combine scientists, particularly in comparison to the light silicate composition of the planet's companion world, Fire) and for its high degree of seismic activity. In combination these two factors make the planet a miner's treasure trove, with large deposits of heavy metals, ores, and radioactives exposed regularly by tectonic action on and beneath the surface.

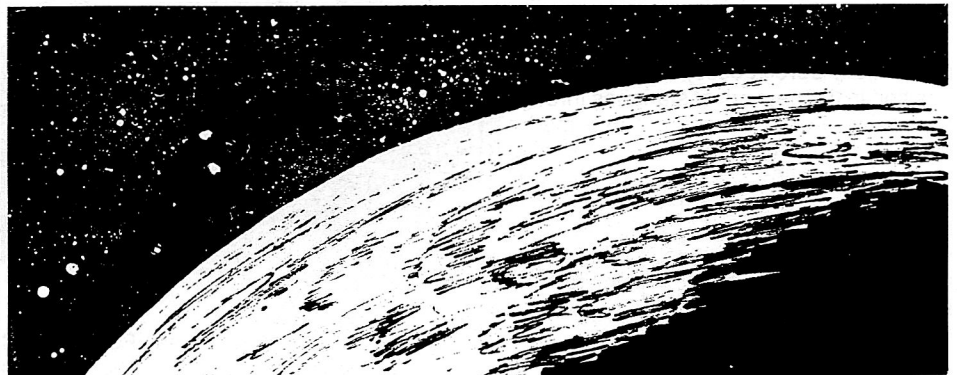
However, the planet is only marginally habitable at best, and colonization remains limited to the area of Port Erebus and outlying mining camps in the north polar region.

Ruled in the name of Duke von Altdorf by a steward appointed from his personal household, Brimstone is treated by the Duchy as something approaching a personal minerals storehouse. Since 3015 and the Third Battle of Port Erebus, regular Kurita forces have been stationed on Brimstone to supplement the three battalions of regular infantry and small AeroSpace defense wing that is the total locally-maintained military force. Because it lies in the region between the Davion/Kurita frontier just to rimward of the Outworlds Alliance, Brimstone has a strategic value in the ongoing Succession Wars that outweighs its purely economic worth.

The Commandant of the Combine garrison on Brimstone is known to be seeking mercenary troops to supplement the forces under his command. However, note should be taken of the fact that the local defense budget is low, and conditions on the planet even in the absence of combat are so dangerous as to make this a poor choice as a potential place of employment. Recent rumors suggest that Davion forces may be shifting on the offensive in this area of space again soon, which suggests the probability of fresh operations around Port Erebus in the near future.

ABOUT WORLDBOOK

Worldbook is a BattleTechnology feature drawn from the computer files of The Navigator's Guide to the Inner Sphere, the 32-volume compendium of explored worlds published by ComStar Press Interstellar, Terra. Brimstone was first printed in Volume 8, The Cis-Alpheratz Sector, and is used here by permission of the publisher.





Battle of Kilgour

July 5th - 6th, 3027 (TC), Corella (Corella II)

BattleTechnology recognizes the fact that many of its readers are either MechWarriors themselves or are keenly interested in the the topic of BattleMech strategy and tactics. As a special service to these readers, the editorial staff at BattleTechnology is pleased to offer this continuing series of in-depth examinations of battle-field tactics as applied in various battles, both through history and during modern-day Battle-Mech campaigns.

The first battle to be examined in this series is the Battle of Kilgour, the culmination of a recent Liao raid into Davion space which is still unresolved. Due to the time lag necessary for information to cross the gulf between stars, news of Kilgour was received at BattleTechnology's editorial offices on Exeter only three days before this issue went to press. We are still awaiting the final word on the outcome of the campaign.

Battle of Kilgour

July 5th - 6th, 3027 (TC), Corella (Corella II)

BACKGROUND

Corella is a K1 star currently lying within the borders of the Federated Suns but formerly belonging to House Liao. Its second planet, also called Corella, is primarily an agricultural world. It shows the usual mix of terrain features common to terrestrial planets throughout the Inner Sphere, with somewhat smaller oceans and markedly larger deserts than are known to Earth. The steppes of Corella's vast, southern continent are, for all intents and purposes, a single vast prairie of mutated wheat of Terran stock, imported during the early Exodus Period of stellar exploration and colonization some seven hundred years ago.

Besides being a significant source of food production, Corella occupies an important position in the network of starlanes through the region. For this reason, it assumed a special importance during the commencement of Operation: Galahad, the round of maneuvers and wargames scheduled to begin on August 22, 3027. Elements of Davion's fleets moving into position for Galahad's maneuvers at Hadhall and Mentasta were deployed through the Corella system.

Wargames and practice maneuvers are not a new phenomenon in this region (see:

What Is Hanse Up To? on page16). For months, Liao's agents had been aware of the increased military traffic in the area, and it was assumed by the Liao Staff Command that these maneuvers were similar to those held at this time last year. There is always the chance, however, that practice maneuvers are in fact a cover for full-fledged mobilization and the precursor to an all-out attack. Late in June, Maximilian Liao decided to stage an intelligence raid on Corella, with the purpose of determining the true nature of Davion's maneuvers.

Timed by a meticulous analysis of undercover agents' reports from various systems throughout the Capellan March, Liao's strike arrived at Corella between major passages of JumpShip convoys. Both JumpPoints were empty, and the only defending forces on the planet were the local militia and the Scotian Highlanders, a single, understrength regiment of mercenaries in the pay of House Davion. Advance elements of Liao Special Forces grounded

at the Corellan spaceport, seizing that facility, as well as the Highlanders' grounded DropShips. Two battalions of Liao Battle-Mechs then set down at the spaceport and deployed to face the local forces. The Liao commander's goal was to secure MechWarrior prisoners for interrogation. The defender's goal was to blunt the Liao attack and recapture the spaceport if possible.

By a coincidence of history and tradition, the principal forces on both sides of the engagement were Highlanders, each claiming descent from Scots colonists from Old Earth. Liao's forces were the Second and Third Battalions of the 2nd Kearny Highlanders, a regiment organized as part of the well-known Northwind Highlanders in Liao's service. The Kearnys are a veteran unit, blooded in numerous engagements along the Capellan Confederation's frontiers. The Scotians, originally raised on Caledonia, have a long and distinguished history of service first to Steiner and later to Davion. With Scots pride as well as military necessity on the line, the engagement was certain to be a bloody one.

Prelude to Battle

Kilgour is an unremarkable village located in the foothills of the Aphalsia Mountains south of Port Corella. Its single distinguishing characteristic is its position at the hub of a road nexus joining Port Corella and other coastal communities with the cities



Black Douglas Forward: Command Lance, Company C, 1st Battalion, Scotian Highlanders, advances to the front at Kilgour

and grain depots in the steppelands south of the mountains.

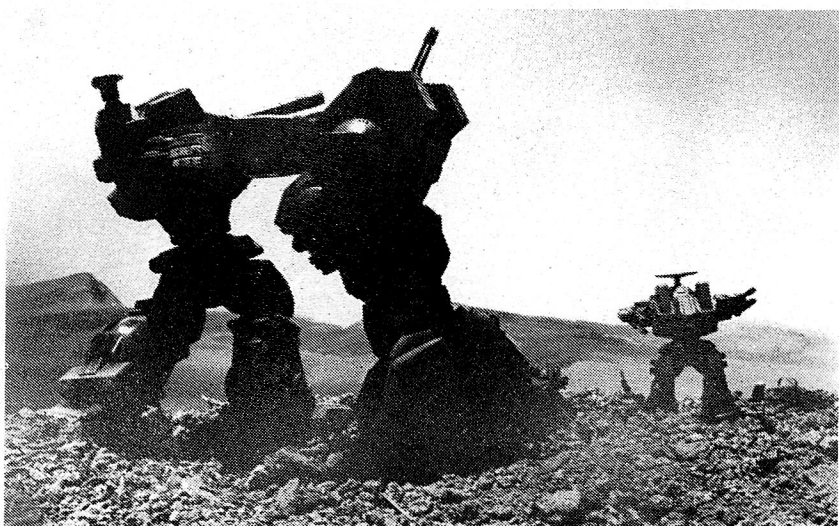
Kilgour became a battlefield when reconnaissance elements of the 2nd Kearny Highlanders clashed with the rear guard of the Scotian Highlanders north of town. Each side thought that they had encountered a small detachment of the opposing force; both sides responded to the initial skirmish by rushing large numbers of troops and BattleMechs towards Kilgour in an attempt to trap what was perceived as an isolated enemy unit. For Major Martell Longheart of the Kearny's Second Battalion, this was a golden opportunity to capture prisoners and gain the intelligence Liao had demanded. For Colonel Ramsay Graham of the Scotians, this was an opportunity to defeat a superior force in detail. Like so many other battles throughout history, Kilgour was a bloody accident.

OPPOSING STRATEGIES

The encounter of July 5th was a complex and lightning-swift series of clash and counter clash which began north of town and carried through the streets of Kilgour itself until much of the town was reduced to rubble. By the time Major Longheart arrived on the field late in the afternoon of July 5th, the Scotian Highlanders had managed to form a strong defensive position along a chain of ridges—Sumner's Ridge, Venable's Ridge, Greirson's Hill, Gray Top—south of Kilgore's ruins. Judging his own forces to be superior to those of the enemy, Longheart ordered a general advance against the Scotian positions.

Colonel Graham was well aware of his own inferior numbers in the contest. Having expected to find a light recon company in Kilgour when he deployed the main body of his army, he found instead almost two full battalions, and himself heavily outclassed both in numbers and in total 'Mech tonnage.

Weighing his chances, he saw essentially two possible plans open to him. The safest course would be to hold his position on the heights south of town, trusting in his advantage of position and defense to tell in the attack he was certain would come. Most



Right (top to bottom):
MECH-TO-MECH:

Lt. Heather Fife's *Archer*,
Command Lance, Company C,
(Black Douglas) takes a Kearny
Rifleman from the flank on
Bloody Field.

of his advisors recommended this course of action.

The second course was far riskier but carried with it the possibility not only of holding against superior numbers, but of *decisively* defeating Longheart's force. By allowing his center to abandon its carefully prepared position along Sumner's Ridge and retreat in apparent disorder, he hoped to tempt the 2nd Kearny Highlanders into a general advance against his center. His flanks, secretly strengthened by units redeployed from his center and camouflaged in the woods north and south of Sumner's Ridge, would hold their positions. The Davion line would be allowed to bend back until it assumed a huge horseshoe shape anchored on the wooded hilltops flanking Sumner's Ridge. When the Liao forces were fully committed in the pocket between Graham's flanks, a signal from Graham, two red rockets, would order the flanking units to fall on Longheart's 'Mechs from the sides and rear. This plan, based somewhat on the tactics used successfully by Hannibal at the ancient Battle of Cannae during Earth's pre-spaceflight era, could give Graham the edge he needed, allowing him to concentrate his firepower against a tightly-packed and relatively slow-moving enemy to best effect.

After careful consideration, Graham elected to ignore his staff's advice, and prepared to adopt the more mobile—and dangerous—defense.

The Battle of Kilgour, Second Day, July 6th, 3027

The Kearny's Third Battalion opened the second day's action at 0530 (TST) with a

general advance against the Scotian's central positions along Sumner's Ridge. According to plan, the Scotians held their position for nearly two hours and forty minutes under a fierce bombardment, then began a slow and deliberate withdrawal back down the reverse slope of the ridge. By 1015 hours, the Scotian Highlanders had fallen back nearly a kilometer to an area labelled "Bloody Field" in Graham's field report. Longheart's battalion, meanwhile, had occupied Sumner's Ridge and was in a position from which they could sweep the far slope of the ridge with heavy fire.

This was the critical point in Graham's battle plan. If Longheart remained where he was, he would retain an unassailable position—the same position, in fact, which Graham had only recently held himself! With Longheart positioned squarely between Graham's flanks but unwilling to advance into the trap, Graham would have no choice but to break off the engagement, a move which was certain to result in serious losses to his flanks and to his already badly mauled center.

Graham was counting, however, on Longheart scenting victory in the wind and ordering an all-out attack.

At 1145 hours, Longheart completed minor repairs to several of his heavy 'Mechs, redeployed his infantry forward, and ordered the Third Battalion to advance. The Second Battalion he held in reserve; he knew Davion forces of unknown strength were still holding the heights north and south of Sumner's Ridge and wanted a reserve which could deal with these units, if necessary. Graham's center, however, beckoned him on down the east slope of the

ridge. With numerous 'Mechs already badly damaged, with Graham's lance formation in visible disarray, the possibility of crushing Graham's force once and for all proved irresistible. One final blow would fragment the Davion mercenaries, leaving them helpless.

The engagement in Bloody Field was a furious, seesaw affair. Graham's forces surprised Longheart's MechWarriors with the savage determination of their defense. The cluster of buildings which marked the Sumner Farm changed hands seven times in less than two hours; it was burned to the ground during the exchange. Graham, hoping to draw Longheart's reserve battalion into the fray, stubbornly refused to give the signal which would unleash his flank assault.

At 1400 hours, as the battle in the Bloody Field continued, Liao infantry platoons scouting the hills north of Sumner's Ridge encountered hidden Davion 'Mechs, and a sharp firefight ensued. Two Graham infantry platoons supported by armed skimmers broke the Liao attack, but it was feared that the nature of the waiting trap had been discovered.

The location of numerous BattleMechs in the woods north of Sumner's Ridge was reported to Major Longheart, but the Liao commander did not act on the information. Perhaps he thought the reports exaggerated. Perhaps he feared a Davion ruse. It is possible that the threat of additional fresh forces on the Davion flank made him withhold his reserves at a critical moment, rather than throw them into the battle. It is impossible at this point to guess whether the Second Battalion's arrival on the field would have allowed Graham to victoriously close his trap on the entire Liao force—or so overwhelmed the Davion defenders that Graham's line would have been fragmented and the survivors hunted down piecemeal.

As the battle continued, Graham's center came perilously close to breaking. Numerous lances were down to a single 'Mech apiece and were absorbed into other lances, and at least three companies had dissolved completely, all of their 'Mechs destroyed, crippled and abandoned, or hopelessly lost in the murky field of battle. At one point, with the Davion line giving way, A Company of the Scotian's First Battalion, Randall's Raiders, hurled themselves against an attacking column of least twice their own tonnage in 'Mechs. Their valiant charge momentarily swept the field of Liao machines but left the Raiders with only four badly damaged 'Mechs still in action. Dozens of 'Mechs on both sides were forced to



HOLDING THE LINE: Capt. Kendric Fraser fires at Marshall Corrigan's Rifleman on Bloody Field.

withdraw temporarily as their heat built to dangerous levels. Several 'Mechs were forced to shut down as their power systems overloaded, freezing them helplessly in place.

At last, Graham could wait no longer. B Company of Macarron's 'Mechs, half its BattleMechs out of the fight, was falling towards the rear, and the entire Davion center wavered, close to collapse. Graham gave the order which fired two red rockets.

Both flank elements had been waiting for the signal, fearful that something had gone wrong, wondering whether to join their comrades or continue to obey orders. Screening forces were thrown south along Sumner's Ridge to keep an eye on the enemy Second Battalion, while the body of the Davion reserves streamed into the Third Battalion's rear and flanks in a full-tilt charge.

The culmination of Graham's plan was a success, though not the total victory for which he had hoped. The 2nd Kearny Highlanders were already as badly bloodied as the Graham center, and the appearance on the field of large numbers of fresh and undamaged 'Mechs was enough to turn the tide of battle with unexpected suddenness. As Graham had planned, the Liao 'Mechs were badly positioned, so tightly grouped that many of their number were unable to fire for fear of hitting their own comrades. After another five minutes of raw and furious carnage, the Kearny's Third Battalion broke, its survivors streaming west up the slope of Sumner Ridge. Graham forces occupying the ridge stepped aside and let them pass, too heavily outnumbered to more than slow the Kearny Highlanders' passing. The Second Battalion advanced in a general demonstration against the Davion line, but the retreat of the Third Battalion seemed to have unnerved the entire Liao force. Once the last of the Third Battalion's survivors were back across Sumner's Ridge, the Liao force pulled back to the relative security of its former positions. The battle ended at 1730 hours, with both armies occupying roughly the same positions as they had twelve hours before.

AFTERMATH

Major Longheart still outnumbered his Davion opponent by a considerable margin, especially considering the fact that Graham's forces had been roughly handled in the back-and-forth slugfest in Bloody Field. Numerous critics have been quick to point out that another hard shove by the Kearny Highlanders on July 7 would have broken the back of the Davion line and

ended resistance on the planet immediately.

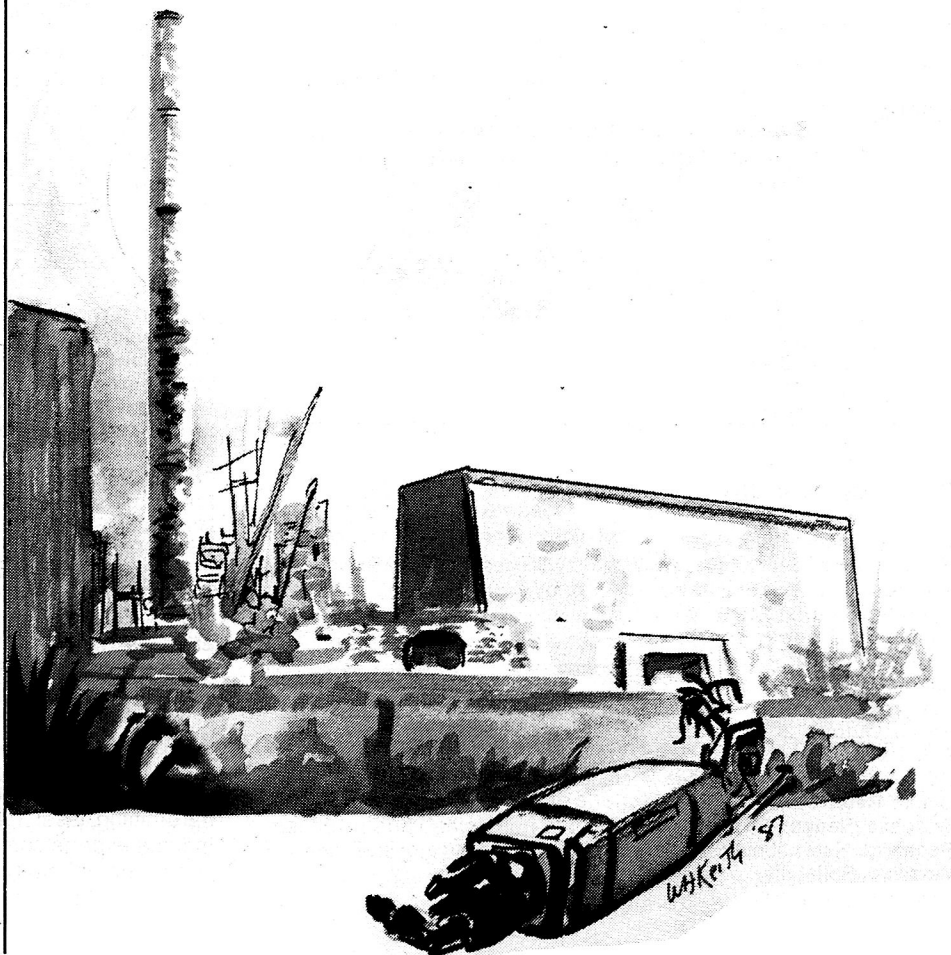
But Longheart could not know what reserves Graham might have, or how badly damaged his partial regiment might be. Besides, he had captured numerous prisoners during the previous, bloody two days and so had technically fulfilled the letter of his operational orders. On July 7, the two armies remained in place, watching one another warily. During the night, Longheart gave the order to withdraw, and the Kearny Highlanders began wending their way north towards Port Corella.

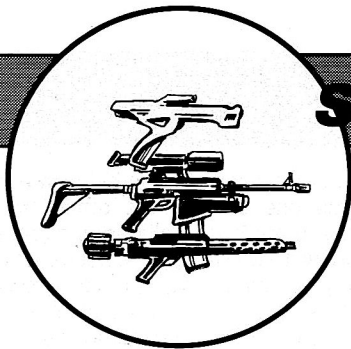
It is yet too early to assess the final effect the Battle of Kilgour will have on the Corellan Campaign. As of the last reports available in Exeter—dated July 29th—the 2nd Kearny Highlanders continued to occupy a static defense perimeter around Port Corella, while Graham's Scotian Highlanders continued to threaten the port and block Liao movements towards the continental interior. Reinforcements on either side

would be certain to tip the balance heavily towards one side or the other, but the command staffs on both sides seem content to wait and watch, at least for now.

Clearly, Kilgour was a major victory for Corella's Davion defenders. The Liao forces on Corella abandoned the field of battle and, more, abandoned the initiative, withdrawing to fixed positions under what amounts to a state of siege.

More importantly from a tactical point of view, however, Kilgour is a clear demonstration of the age-old axiom that no plan survives contact with the enemy, that even the most daring, best laid or most foolproof plan will not unfold in the manner envisioned by its creators. Even with the art of warfare honed by centuries of continuous bloodshed into a study with all the keen precision of any science, modern combat remains a discipline more subject to chance than to design.





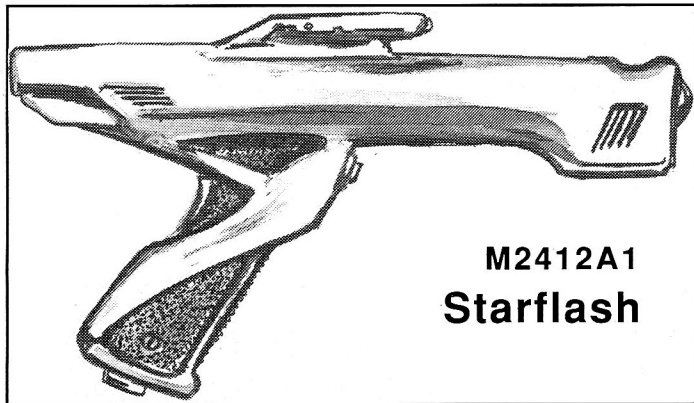
Sidearms

Laser Pistols

by the BattleTechnology Staff

BattleTechnology opens its series column on popular military and paramilitary weaponry with an examination of some of the most popular laser pistols currently on the market. Though restricted in power and range compared to other weapons, laser pistols have been eagerly sought as personal sidearms since their introduction on the battlefield over eight centuries ago. Today, especially, hand laser weaponry remains the badge of success and deadly, high-tech prowess for veteran mercenary troopers and regular infantry alike. Laser weapons have been referred to as the cutting edge of weapons technology.

Our listing makes use of the New Avalon Edition of the Galactic Consumer's Report, volume 27, number 5, for determinations of reliability and for testing reports. BattleTechnology cannot assume responsibility for the technical accuracy or safety of the weapons described in this column.



**M2412A1
Starflash**

Optronics M2412A1 "Starflash"

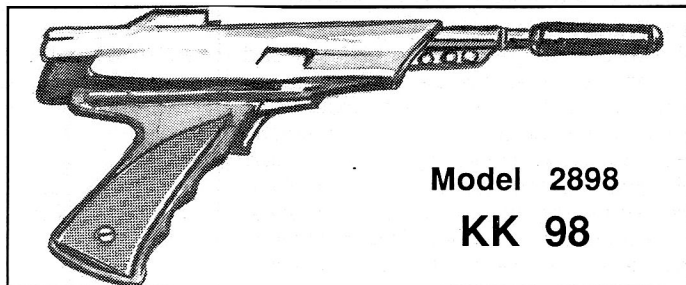
Weapon Type: Laser Pistol
Manufacturer: General Optronics, and by license on over 250 worlds throughout the Inner Sphere.
Operation: Pulse laser pistol
Weight (w/o power pack): 1.2 kg
(power pack): 1.5 kg
Length (w/o power pack): 23 cm
Power: Optronics T5J Starflash Dual-Power Cell
Power Output: .5 megajoule
Pulse: .01 second
Power Pack Life: 100 pulses at standard output
Cyclic Rate: 60 pulse/minute
Effective Range: 60 meters
Recharge Rate: about 20 hours, depending on source reliability
Weapon Reliability: 96%
Base Cost: Cb 850

Notes: One of the oldest laser pistol designs still in production, the Starflash has a long and venerable history which predates the Star League itself. Though underpowered and bulky by the standards of League-period technology, it has acquired a justly-deserved reputation for ruggedness and reliability which has been maintained for over six centuries. Originally manufactured on Terra, the weapon is still produced in limited quantities by arms manufacturers on at least 250 worlds across the Inner Sphere.

Power is supplied from a light-weight, rechargeable belt pack connected to the pistol by a one-meter cable. The original design included a holster built into the power pack, but later production models and personal modifications to older weapons generally dispensed with the combination in favor of lighter, more easily-replaced power units and less expensive thigh holsters.

The relatively low power output results in a high cyclic rate of 60 ppm at .5 megajoule/.01 second pulse. The power output setting is not adjustable. The powerpack may be disconnected and a standard 20-shot grip magazine pack used instead.

The reliability and easy maintenance of these weapons has resulted in their being adopted as standard sidearms for the armies or militias of over 40 worlds, but they are encountered as individual personal weapons in the hands of MechWarriors and mercenaries nearly everywhere.



**Model 2898
KK 98**

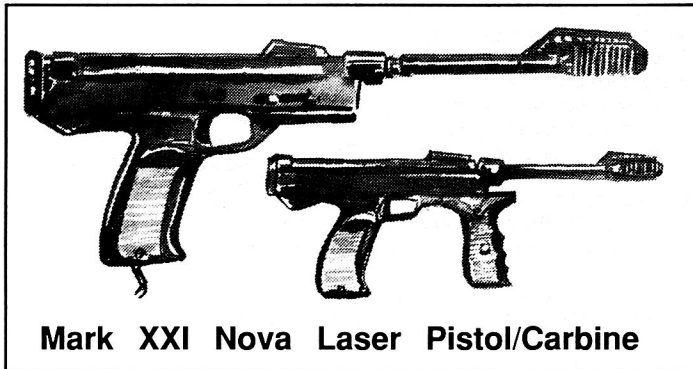
Kogyo-Khorsakov Model 2898, "KK 98"

Weapon Type: Laser Pistol
Manufacturer: Kogyo Industries
Operation: Pulse laser pistol
Weight (w/o power pack): .8kg
(power pack): 1.2kg
Length (w/o power pack): 17 cm
Power: RV 90 Power Cell
Power Output: .8 megajoule
Pulse: .01 second
Maximum Setting: 1.2 megajoule/.1 second
Power Pack Life: 80 pulses at standard output
 10 pulses at maximum output
Cyclic Rate: 40 pulse/minute at standard output
 10 pulse/minute at maximum output
Effective Range: 75 meters
Recharge Rate: about 25 hours, depending on source reliability
Weapon Reliability: 99% at standard output
 81% at maximum output
Base Cost: Cb 550

Notes: The KK 98 has won a deserved reputation as a rugged and hard-hitting laser hand gun. Produced in quantity at the Kogyo Industries arms complex on Luthien, and by license on numerous worlds throughout the Draconis Combine, this weapon and various copies can be encountered on worlds throughout human space.

An adjustable power setting allows the user to vary power and pulse length, though the weapon's service life and performance drop sharply at high settings. Its principal advantage is its practically legendary "idiot-proof" electronics which require virtually no maintenance. Independent testers have reported the weapon continues to function flawlessly with minimum care even after being immersed in mud or operated under mildly corrosive atmospheric conditions or at sub-zero temperatures.

Exact figures are not available, but a very large number of KK 98s have been produced since they were first introduced in 2898. It is frequently encountered in the hands of MechWarriors and techs on countless worlds throughout Kurita space and beyond.



Magna Mark XXI "Nova"

Weapon Type: Laser Pistol/carbine
Manufacturer: Magna Industries
Operation: High-intensity beam laser pistol
Weight (w/o power pack): 1.35 kg
(power pack): 2.2kg
Length (w/o stock): 40.5 cm
(w/ stock): 66 cm
Power: Magna R5J Starbeam transpower cell
Power Output: 1 megajoule pulse
.3 megajoule at continuous beam
Pulse: Variable phase .01 second to continuous beam
Power Pack Life: 400 pulses at minimum pulse
2 minutes at continuous beam
Effective Range: 100 meters
w/stock and grip: 250 meters
Cyclic Rate: 90 pulse/minute
Recharge Rate: about 30 hours, depending on source reliability
Weapon Reliability: 95%
Base Cost: Cb 1200

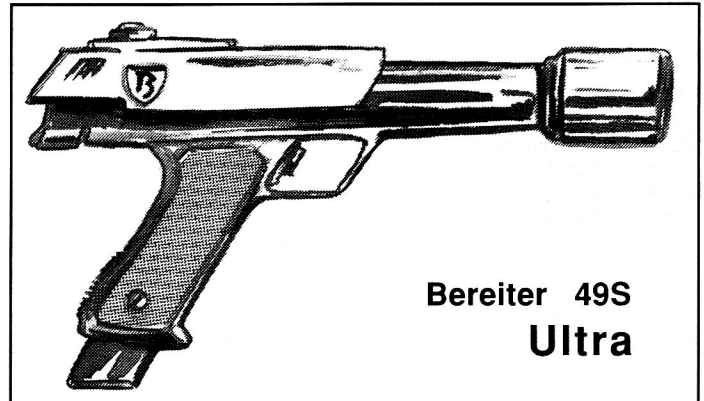
Notes: The Mark XXI Nova is a superb, heavy-duty beam laser with a variable phase pulse control that allows pulsed operation. The power pack is compact, if heavy, and is worn on the belt in a pouch designed with quick-release straps to secure the weapon to the hip.

A notable feature is the design which allows a forehand grip and a lightweight, duraplast stock to be quickly snapped into place, converting the Nova into a lightweight laser carbine. Accuracy is somewhat greater in controlled fire using stock and foregrip. Telescopic or lowlight sights can be mounted as well.

The design is somewhat complex and requires careful maintenance for best reliability. The weapon's primary disadvantages are its great length and weight, which make it somewhat clumsy for a handgun. Though lighter than standard laser carbines, it does not

have the length and accuracy of longer weapons. The beam function is useful for cutting through metal doors, however, and if held on target, can pierce even heavy personal armor.

Numerous models of the original 28th century production run are still in service. Rarely encountered as a standard military weapon, the Nova is favored by mercenaries and paramilitary forces who favor its weight and the psychological impact of its appearance. "Nobody," as the old merc saying goes, "argues with a Mark Twenty-one up his nose!"

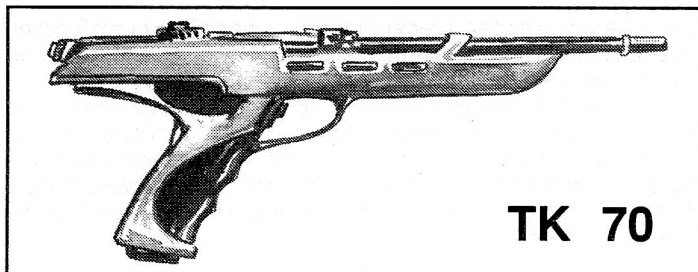


Bereiter 49S "Ultra"

Weapon Type: Laser Pistol
Manufacturer: Bereiter Arms
Operation: Pulse laser pistol
Weight: 1.9kg
Length: 24 cm
Power: VV "Mega-V" grip magazine power unit
Power Output: .6 megajoule
Pulse: .2 second
Power Pack Life: 70 pulses
Cyclic Rate: 40 pulse/minute
Effective Range: 50 meters
Recharge Rate: about 15 hours, depending on source reliability
Weapon Reliability: 85%
Base Cost: Cb 180

Notes: This standard laser pistol from Bereiter Arms is a low-cost hand energy weapon mass-produced for the mercenary, security force, and private buyer's market. The internal grip power pack frees the weapon from cumbersome belt or shoulder packs and power leads, making it a compact and easily-handled weapon. The .6 megajoule output is respectable for a power pack of such small size. Unfortunately, the energy curve builds slowly and the power output is spread into an unusually long, .2-second pulse, with the result that the weapon is almost useless against armored or ablative or rapidly-moving targets. Lack of standardization among various Bereiter licensees results in many weapons of extremely poor quality or reliability.

Specific problems include barrel failure or chamber feed meltdown during rapid cycling due to an inefficient air-cooled capacitor matrix and occasionally shoddy microcircuit chips which can result in a "coldsqueeze," a failure to energize which can result in chamber meltdown and destruction of the weapon. Armor-piercing ability is mediocre. Testers have also noted that the weapon's lens alignment is easily jarred by falls or rough usage. Frequent maintenance is mandatory to keep the weapon in serviceable condition.



TK 70

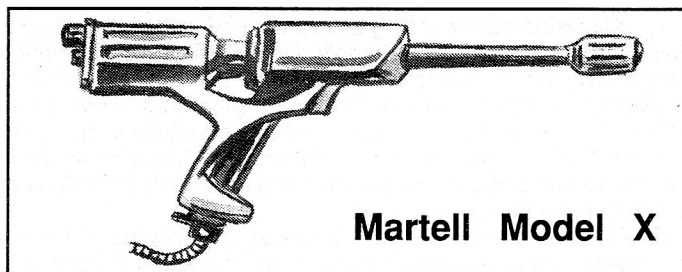
TK 70

Weapon Type: Military Laser Pistol
Manufacturer: Thorvald & Koch
Operation: Pulse laser pistol
Weight (pistol): .88kg
(backpack): 2.5 kg
Length (w/o power pack): 21 cm
Power: Sunbeam-electric 12000 shoulder pack
Power Output: 1 megajoule
Pulse: .01 second
Maximum Setting: 1.4 megajoule/.03 second
Power Pack Life: 300 pulses at standard output
 100 pulses at maximum output
Cyclic Rate: 60 pulse/minute
Effective Range: 120 meters
Recharge Rate: about 30 hours, depending on source reliability
Weapon Reliability: 97% at standard setting
 90% at full output
Base Cost: Cb 700

Notes: The TK 70 is a military-quality, heavy-duty megajoule laser pistol powered from a lightweight shoulder pack. The weapon has been known since the 28th Century for reliability and dependability under virtually any environmental conditions.

It has an adjustable power output vernier which allows ranging shots at nil setting, to full-powered blasts of almost one and a half million joules in .03-second pulses. Armor-piercing and target damage is good at standard settings, superb at maximum output.

Still under production at the TK arms plants on Tharkad, New Avalon, and Skye, the TK laser pistol is encountered throughout much of human-explored space. Its high cost puts it out of reach for all but standard military or wealthy paramilitary or mercenary forces. Its ruggedness has resulted in numerous weapons being passed on from generation to generation of warriors, however, and old, low-serial number models are frequently found in the hands of mercenary warriors everywhere.



Martell Model X

Martell Laser Pistol, Model X

Weapon Type: Military Laser Pistol
Manufacturer: Martell Industries
Operation: Beam laser pistol
Weight (pistol): 1 kg
(power pack): 1.5 kg
Length (w/o power pack): 25 cm
Power: Diverse Electronics Power Pack
Power Output: 1 megajoule
Beam: Variable: .2 to 5 seconds
Maximum Setting: .2 megajoule/.1 second
Power Pack Life: 100 seconds standard output
 10 seconds at maximum output
Effective Range: 100 meters
Recharge Rate: about 30 hours, depending on source reliability
Weapon Reliability: 95% at standard setting
 90% at full output
Base Cost: Cb 750

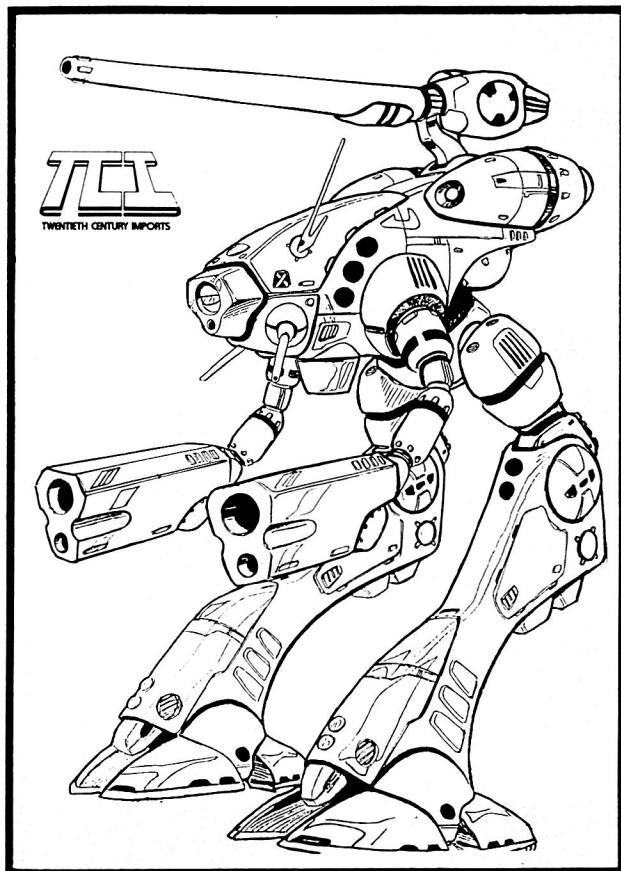
Notes: The Martell laser pistol fires a beam of coherent light. While the power/time ratio is considerably lower than that of a pulse laser, the beam can be set and held for up to 5 seconds, making this weapon useful for cutting through armor or heavy barriers. The power pack allows up to twenty five-second beamings. An optional, in-grip power magazine allows a total of ten seconds of beaming—between two and fifty shots, depending on the burst length setting.

The weapon's chief drawback is the need to hold the beam steady on target long enough to cut through thick armor, and it is virtually useless against BattleMechs or armored vehicles. It is unsurpassed, however, in close combat with lightly armored foes or as a cutting torch in emergency situations. The weapon has been widespread throughout the Inner Sphere since it was first manufactured in 2880. It is a durable and reliable weapon favored by many mercenary warriors as a personal sidearm.

Future issues of BattleTechnology will report on other weapons classes common in the Galaxy, including submachine guns, laser rifles, personal anti-Mech weapons, and blades. Readers are encouraged to suggest topics for future columns, and to contribute reports of their own describing weapons of note or interest to the modern warrior.

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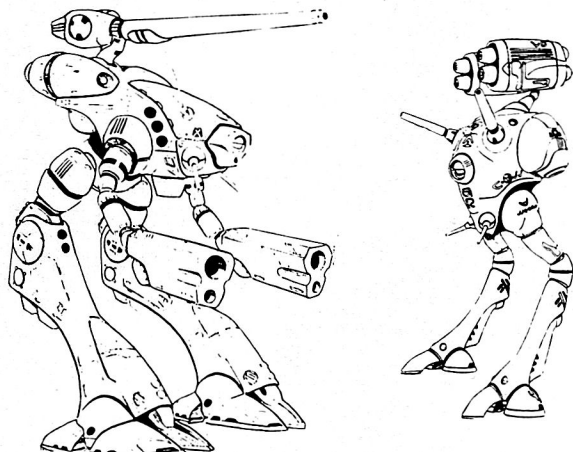
In any game, visual excitement is an important factor. This is especially true for FASA's best-selling BattleTech game. TCI's kits formed the original basis for the game, and add the essential element of 3D excitement.

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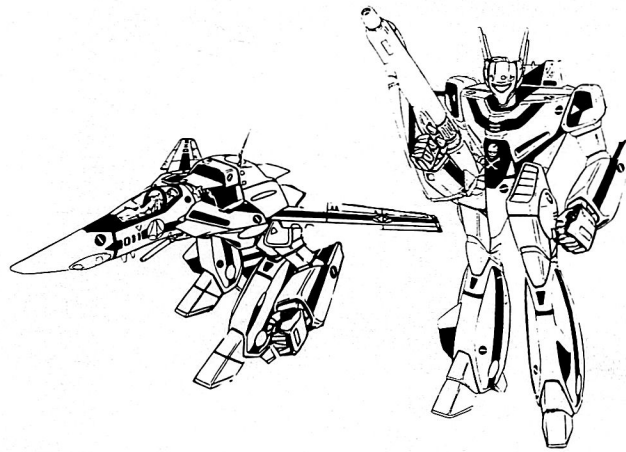
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Wasp

What Is Hanse Up To?

Maneuvers and Wargames Bring the Successor States Closer to All-Out War

by BattleTechnology Special Correspondent Wallis Hasek

All military leaves are cancelled. Mech-Warriors, armored troops, line infantry, techs and astechs, ship's crew and specialists, all are ordered to report aboard their ships without delay.

Far off in space, JumpShips appear at an alien sun's JumpPoint, blanketing nearby space with ECM jamming. DropShips cast off from their two-kilometer long carriers, fusion pulse plasma drives and old-fash-

ioned chemical rockets burn in brilliant, miniature suns which accelerate the DropShips towards the distant planet. Aerospace fighters range ahead, seeking the enemy, as reconnaissance satellite pods arrow into trajectories which will loop them around the target planet days in advance of the approaching armada. On the planet's surface, aboard orbital space stations, and on advance defense outposts on the

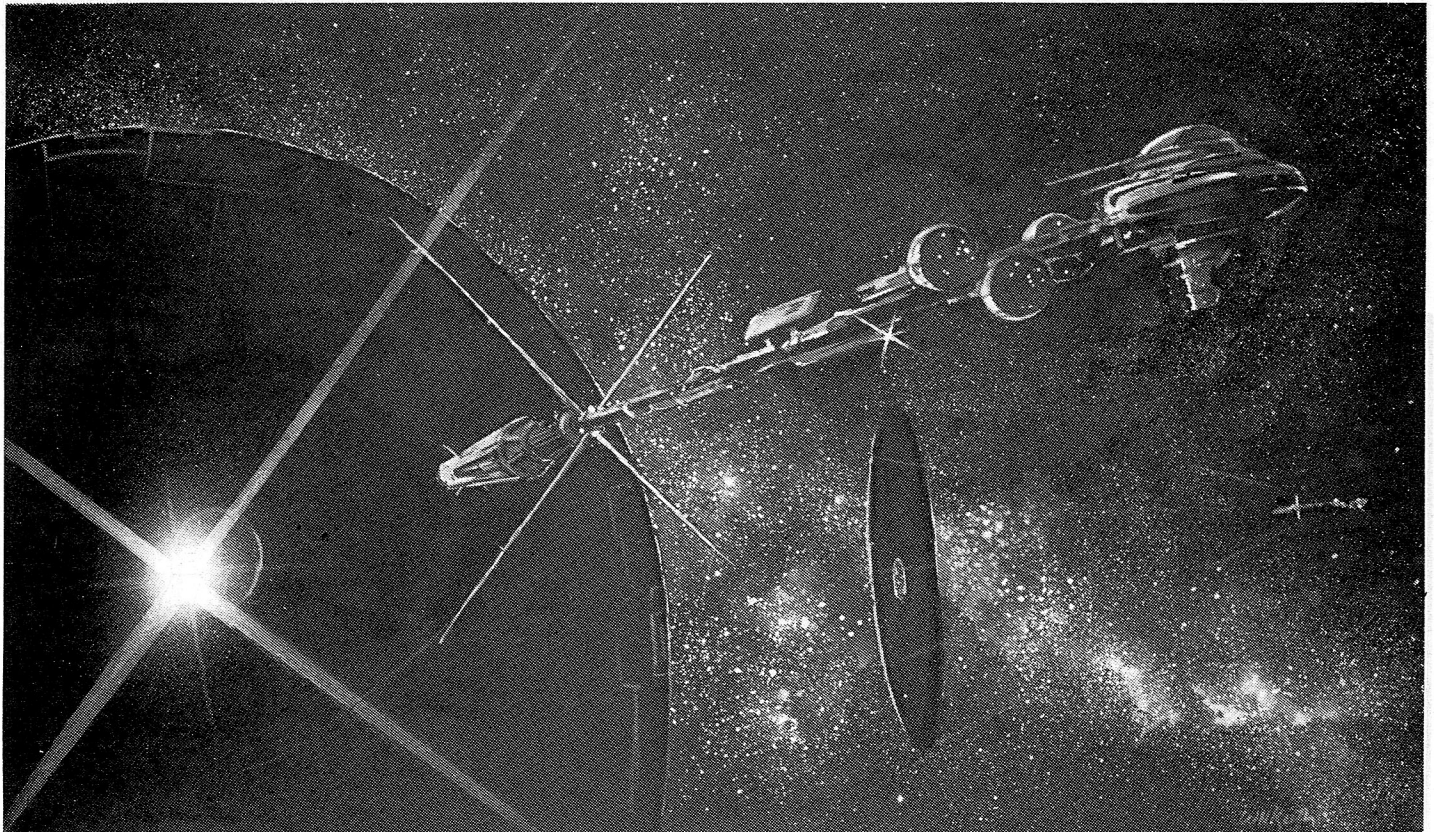
planet's moons, hard-eyed men and women bend over their scanners, noting the approach of Davion Expeditionary Force Twelve-Alpha.

Passage from JumpPoint to target world takes four days, typical travel time within the planetary system of a K-class star such as Fallon.

There is plenty of time for Fallon II's defenders to prepare a warm reception.

This is not a scenario for hypothetical all-out war, but fact. This week, practice invasions are being carried out at Fallon II, at McGehee, at Groveld III, and at dozens of other worlds within the Federated Suns, along the borders of both the Draconis Combine and the Capellan Confederation. This year's games have created something of a stir throughout the Confederation. August of last year, 3026, was witness to the grandest set of wargames and practice maneuvers yet unleashed on the Inner Sphere...until this August (TC) when Prince Hanse Davion announced Operation: Galahad, the wargames of 3027.

"We, the free peoples of the Federated Suns, are beset on every side by the forces of Darkness, forces which would tear us down and subject us to the blackest form of tyranny," Prince Davion announced earlier this week. His speech was holovised live



from the Summer Palace at Stirling, on the world of Argyle, and was made available to the news media of worlds across the Human Sphere as a delayed broadcast via the ComStar HPG net.

"If we are to stand against this darkness which is hammering at the very walls of our society," Davion continued, "if we are to preserve our way of life, our way of thought, our very being against this dark menace, if, indeed, we are ever to win our true destiny as the rebirth of the glory of the Star League of old, then we must be ever watchful, ever ready. Freedom, my friends, has a price, and that price is eternal vigilance!"

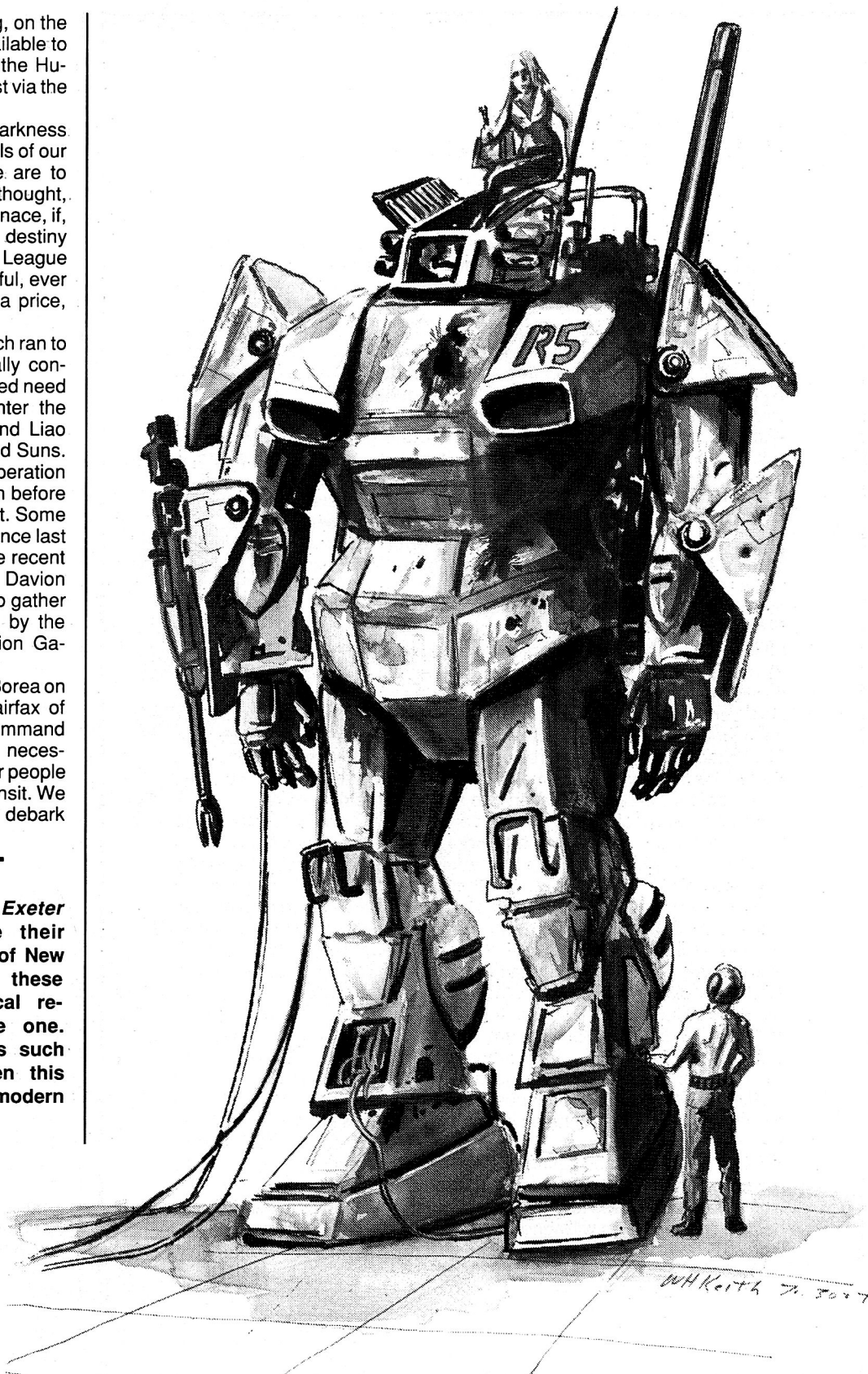
The text of Prince Davion's speech ran to thirty-seven minutes, but it basically concentrated on one point: the continued need for military preparedness to counter the threat posed by Houses Kurita and Liao along the marches of the Federated Suns.

The maneuvers comprising Operation Galahad were well under way even before the prince made his announcement. Some maneuvers have been underway since last month. Many observers believe the recent incursion by a Liao task force into Davion space last month was an attempt to gather intelligence, an attempt prompted by the preliminary maneuvers of Operation Galahad.

At his field headquarters at Port Borea on Klathandu IV, General Wesley Fairfax of the Federated Suns Supreme Command Staff said, "These maneuvers are necessary. We have to know that all of our people know their places in a DropShip transit. We have to know that our people can debark

OPPOSITE: JumpShip FSS *Exeter* and a sister ship recharge their drives at the nadir JumpPoint of New Avalon. JumpShips such as these represent a vital technological resource—and an irreplaceable one. Do needless military exercises such as Operation Galahad threaten this vital link in the framework of modern civilization?

RIGHT: BattleMechs may be the kings of the modern battlefield, but training operations such as Operation Galahad could squander precious resources needed elsewhere.



OPERATION GALAHAD: THE WASTE OF ALMOST-WAR

by Minority Leader Naomi Gavin Rollings, New Avalon

It is a categorical fact that we in the Federated Suns are at war, have been at war, in fact, for over a century and a half. The necessity for conducting military training maneuvers—wargames—when our armed forces have been stretched to the limit defending our frontiers for so long a time escapes me utterly.

What makes this so-called Operation Galahad even more preposterous is the realization that, for the past two decades at least, the vast, interstellar struggle for ascendancy known as the Third Successor State War has been bogged down in a hopeless deadlock, with none of the five combatants able to achieve significant military advantage over the others. After one hundred sixty years of bloodshed, after so many, many years of watching the very fabric of our culture unravel in the scorching waste of war, perhaps the one *good* thing that can be said for the current situation is that the combatants are rapidly becoming too exhausted to continue the struggle! With resources stretched to the limit, with seemingly endless casualty lists, with those very keystones of the modern battlefield, the BattleMechs, vanishing faster than our ravaged industry can possibly replace them, we are faced with a new and daunting prospect...that of peace, true and lasting peace, in our time!

And what does Hanse Davion hope to achieve with his bellicose saber-rattling, these games and threats and childish gestures set in the guise of training exercises? What he hopes to gain, and what he actually gains may be two entirely different things. Whatever Davion expected to win through his Operation Galahad, what he has achieved in fact is a staggering expenditure in both war materiel and in treasury outlays—the taxpayer's C-Bills, in fact. More, he has stirred up military activity in response in both the Kurita and the Liao camps, making new raids and reprisals more likely, where before mutual exhaustion had rendered them less likely.

Perhaps worst of all, he has made accidental collision between the hostile forces along both marches more than likely—inevitable, in fact. If a century and a half of warfare has taught us anything, it is that a raid by one side will provoke a raid by the other, tit-for-tat, in an ongoing spiral of raids and counter-raids which seems to have no ending short of genocide.

If Hanse Davion hopes to end the fighting between the sundered Houses of the old Star League, it seems to me he has two possible alternatives. He could mount an all-out, crushing invasion of the Federated Suns' old enemies, destroy their fleets and armies, sack Luthien and Sian and depose their leaders. Kurita and Liao are unlikely to cooperate in such a scenario of all-out warfare, and Davion would be well-advised to conserve our dwindling military strength for the attempt and not squander it in useless, wasteful gestures such as Operation Galahad.

Alternatively, he could seek peace. House Kurita and House Liao both are as exhausted by centuries of nearly continuous warfare as are we. Perhaps an offer of peace, a formal request for truce and negotiations towards a peaceful resolution of the differences between us would be received with relief rather than suspicion. But the key to such an offer would be a willingness to back down from confrontation, a willingness to demonstrate our own willingness to give peace a chance.

In neither scenario is there room for the wasteful almost-war of Operation Galahad.

quickly or make a combat drop into a heavily-defended target drop zone. If they don't know before Operation Galahad, they damn well will after. Better they learn it in a training run, though, than in the face of enemy fire."

Critics of Davion's wargame maneuvers were quick to point out that, technically, the Federated Suns are already at war with both Liao and Kurita, and that special training maneuvers are scarcely necessary—or rational—in the current situation. Minority Leader Naomi Gavin Rollings, in an interview at the Capitol on New Avalon immediately after the broadcast of the Prince's message there, said, "Aren't we at war already? Two months ago, a Kurita battalion raided Dobson. Twelve hundred soldiers and civilians, five BattleMechs, and a ball bearing factory were lost. Last month there was that Liao raid on Corella, and the big battle that followed (see: BattleTac, in this issue of BattleTechnology). If our soldiers aren't being trained by the out-and-out warfare that's going on all around us, all the time, then they sure aren't going to learn any better play acting at the taxpayer's expense!"

Dr. Vladimir Kandinsky, head professor of Applied History at the New Avalon Institute of Science, agreed. "The Third Successor State War began in 2866. That same war has continued now for one hundred sixty years. There have been intervals of relative calm brought on by the mutual exhaustion of the participants, but for all intents and purposes, the war goes on now, year after year. Prince Davion's wargames are not likely to change that."

"Aren't we at war already?"

BattleTechnology has discovered that Dr. Kandinsky was dismissed from his position as head of the Applied History Department at NAIS shortly after his interview with the holonews media. There has been intense speculation that Kandinsky lost the prestigious post at the Federated Suns' principal military academy because of his failure to support the official government position. Dr. Kandinsky has not been available for comment.

The principal criticism levied at this year's wargames is the monumental cost. The expense of gathering a single BattleMech regiment, of embarking it aboard DropShips and transporting it to regimental JumpShips, of then transporting that regiment tens or even hundreds of light years across the marches can run into tens of millions of

C-Bills. The total cost in food, fuel, and time is expected to reach Cb 250,000,000.

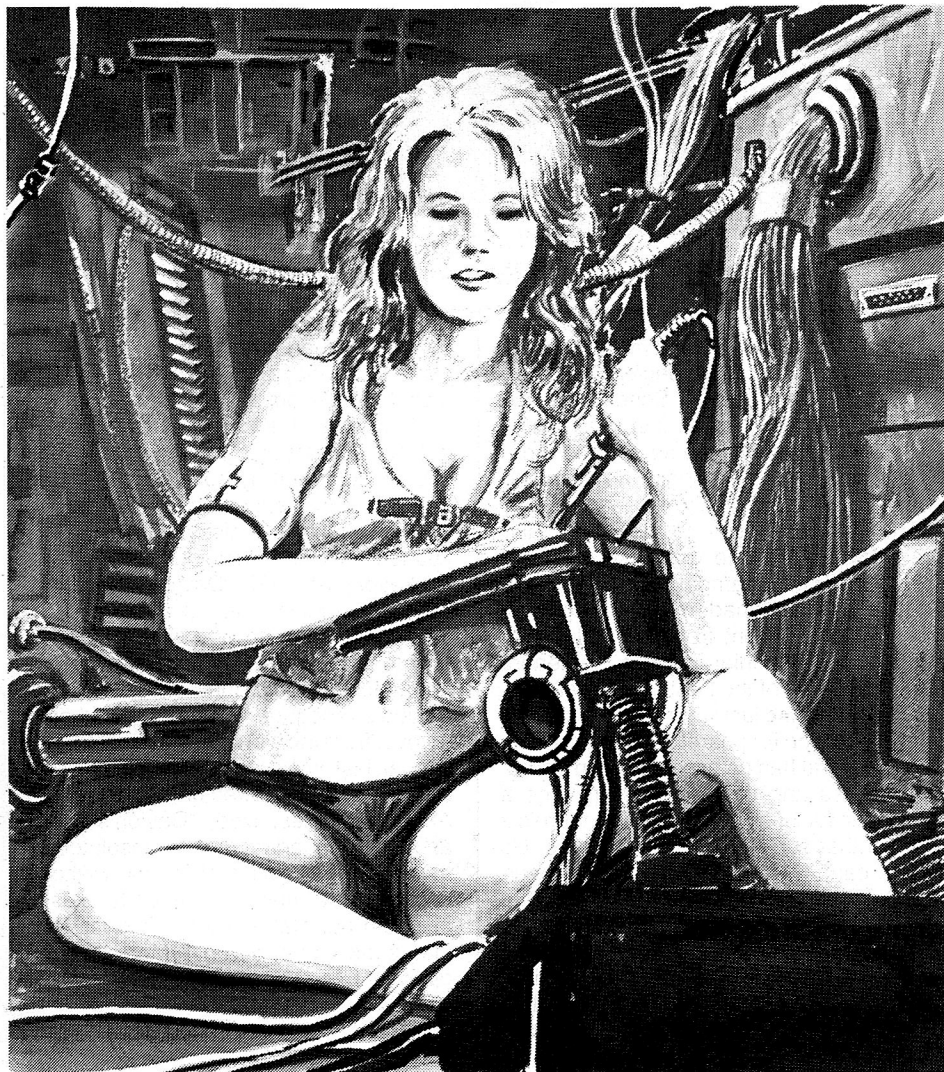
This does not count extra, unanticipated expenses. "Mistakes are bound to happen," Regis Rutherford, of the Citizen's Watch on Government (C-WOG) said outside his home in Stirling, Argyle. "BattleMechs will be damaged—not may be damaged, *will* be damaged—in accidents loading them aboard ship, in accidents during planet drop training, in accidents out in some Blake-forsaken swamp where the regiment is holding maneuvers. And worse than that, these maneuvers are certain to provoke Luthien and Sian, not frighten them. The

increase in raids and armed clashes along both borders during the past month are certainly the result of all the extra military traffic going in and out...and because the Kuritists and Liaos are curious about what's going on."

Indeed, curiosity appears to be the motive behind last month's raid by Liao forces on the Davion planet of Corella. Harder to explain is the reported raid by Davion forces on Hell, fifth planet of the star Scheat. Davion space and 'Mech forces reportedly on maneuvers made the jump from the Davion base at Klanthandu IV to the Scheat system and made a combat drop on the

"Us Techs can't keep working magic forever, you know."

Kathi Leander, on Klanthandu IV. Techs throughout the human sphere are finding it harder and harder to come up with the spare parts necessary to keep military units at a reasonable level of combat efficiency. Do maneuvers such as Galahad hasten the onset of a new round of Dark Ages?



OPERATION GALAHAD: THE PRICE OF VIGILANCE

General J. Wesley Fairfax III,
Davion Command Staff,
Klanthandu IV

Critics of Prince Davion's Operation: Galahad tend to focus on one fact, that we of the Federated Suns are already at war, that we have been at war for centuries, in fact. Technically, this is true, since the conflict known as the Third Successor State War has never formally ended. It must be pointed out, however, that the combat readiness of the Federated Suns space and BattleTech forces cannot be counted on unless it is verified and supported through frequent training exercises such as Galahad.

There is a further, deeper necessity to military maneuvers such as Galahad. Never forget that our enemies, the military planners and staffs at Luthien and Sian, are watching these maneuvers very carefully indeed. I can think of no better way to demonstrate our willingness to confront them in open conflict, our readiness to defend and preserve that liberty which we hold dear, than to demonstrate our combat readiness on a regular basis. There is good reason to believe that the relative peace which has ensued across both frontiers during this past year is in fact the result of both the Combine and the Confederation taking note of the highly successful test deployments and maneuvers of our forces last August and deciding that a major invasion had a low probability for success. If the enemy knows that an invasion is going to be costly because the defender is well-trained and well-prepared, then he probably will never invade in the first place.

And that, rather than the training, is the true value of these maneuvers. The Prince's critics contend that maneuvers are expensive, but their cost is miniscule compared to the cost in men, worlds, resources, and irreplaceable industry and war machines should Kurita and Liao launch a full-scale invasion.



Wargames: Are they as wasteful as the real thing?

Kurita military and industrial facilities at that world's south pole. Numerous observers in the capital at New Avalon commented that Prince Davion's lengthy invective against Kurita hostility seemed somewhat lacking in substance and conviction when viewed against the background of such useless and costly raids as this. Members of the Davion Staff Command refused to comment, saying only that the operation was still going on, and that they would not jeopardize its success.

A similar raid was carried out by Davion forces in August of 3026, as part of last year's round of so-called "training maneuvers." (see: *Descent Into Hell*, in this issue of *BattleTechnology*) A battalion-sized element was dropped, at extraordinary risk, cost, and loss of material, onto the southern hemisphere of this otherwise unremarkable planet. Factories were destroyed, a starport severely damaged, and elements of the 4th Proserpina Hussars were mauled in a campaign lasting nearly two weeks. The total cost for last year's raid: an estimated 800 million C-Bills. Experts believe the cost

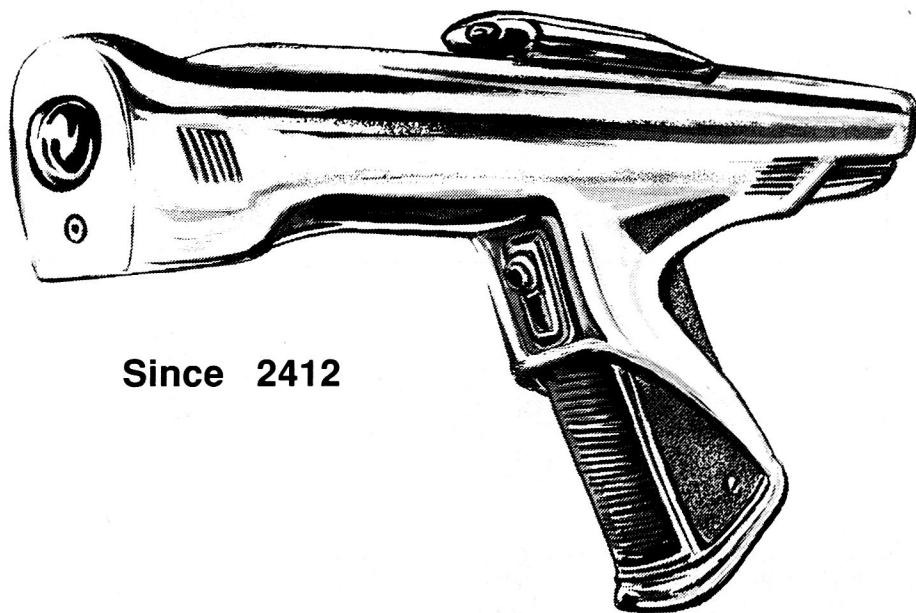
for this year's raid on Scheat may be significantly higher. It is expected that the Combine's defenses on Scheat V have been strengthened since last year's raid, and combat there will be fiercer and more protracted. Losses among the invading forces could be extremely high—and costly.

The normal losses to accidents and breakdowns, and the exorbitant costs of conducting sham campaigns as extensive as Operation Galahad, may outweigh any losses to equipment from outright battle. Kathi Leander, senior Tech to Lieutenant James Gannon of the First Crucis Lancers, said frankly, "And just where the hell are we supposed to go for spare parts? Every time some admiral has us assemble and board, there's loss and breakage. Every time a JumpShip furls sail and hauls ass, there's a chance that sucker ain't comin' home. Us Techs can't keep working magic forever, you know." It is a well-known fact that JumpShips represent an irreplaceable technological resource. Once the last JumpShip is lost, whether through combat or accident or simple inability to maintain

operation, then the Interstellar Age will come to an end, and Mankind will again be planetbound—possibly forever.

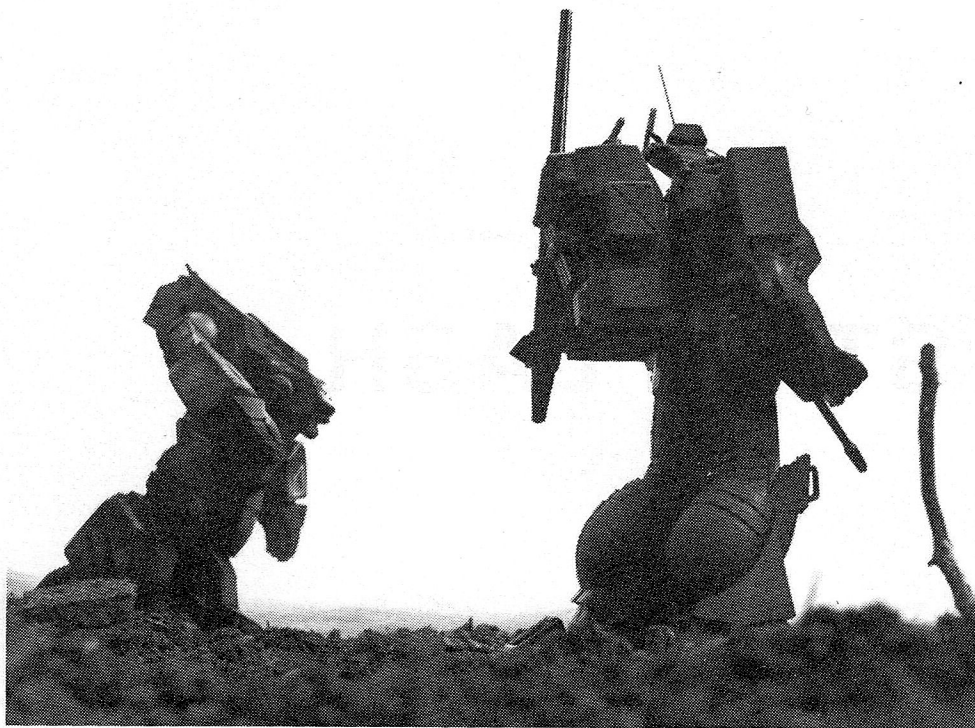
Meanwhile, the blind maneuverings of interstellar fleets along hostile borders have excited comment by both Liao and Kurita observers. In a statement released by the Draco Combine's Ministry of Information at Luthien last week, an unidentified Combine spokesperson said, "Davion's posturings and saber-rattlings are meaningless, the sour noises of a spoiled child. He means only to provoke the Combine's forces into an attack. Should that attack fall, New Avalon's renegade princeling would never recover from the blow." In a statement made on Sian last week, Colonel Pavel Ridzik, the Strategic Military Director of the Capellan Armed Services, said, "Davion's threats and warmongering are of absolutely no account. If the House of Davion wishes to escalate the hostilities already existing between our states, he will find in House Liao a more than willing, a more than able opponent."

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MechWarriors: more than ordinary training

MECHWARRIOR:

Mind and Machine

by Keith Douglas, MechWarrior
and Colonel Kuan Li-Po (Ret.)

Since the invention of the BattleMech nearly six hundred years ago, there have been countless experiments directed at finding an "ideal" method of training MechWarriors for combat. On poor worlds where there are no real training facilities and even practice with a 'Mech must be limited to conserve scanty supplies and avoid costly damage, training may be ignored entirely; Warlords and Bandit Kings often choose their recruits by a simple press-gang approach, shove them into a 'Mech cockpit, and expect them to fight or die. Generally they do both. At the other end of the scale are the elaborate training facilities available to the Great Houses, exemplified by Hanse Davion's bold concept of the New Avalon

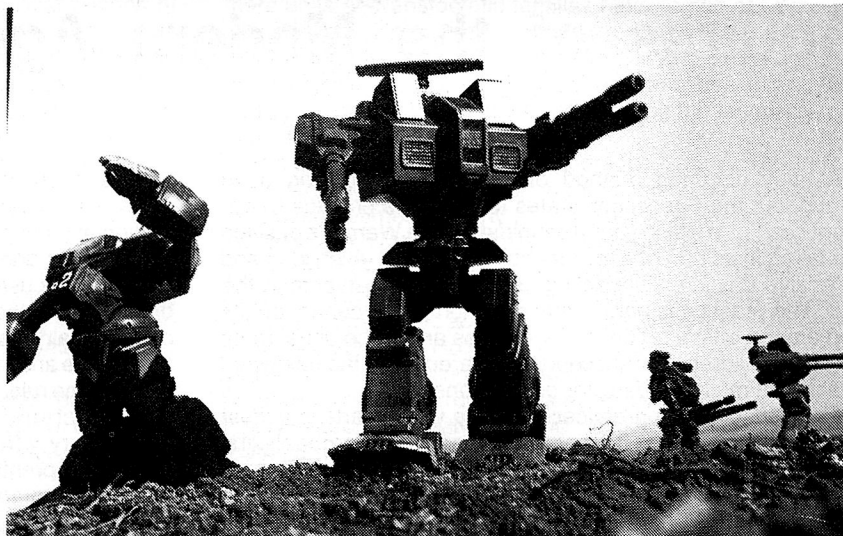
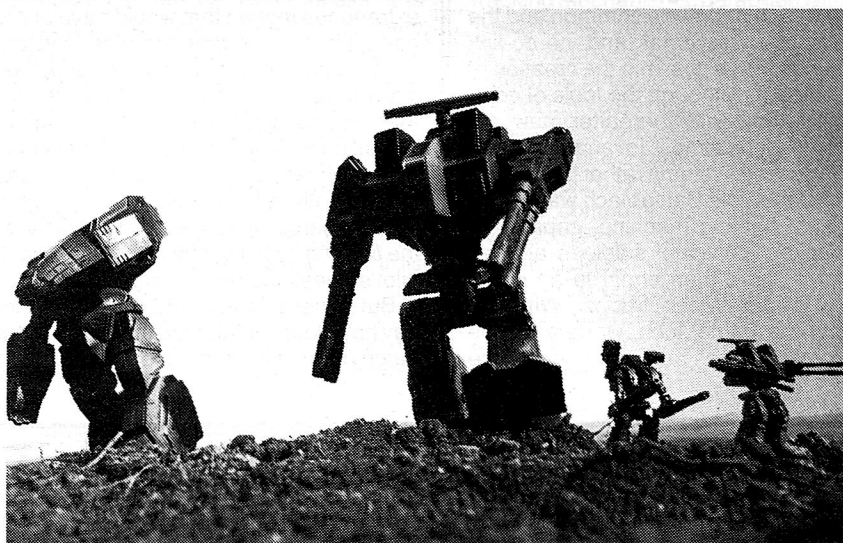
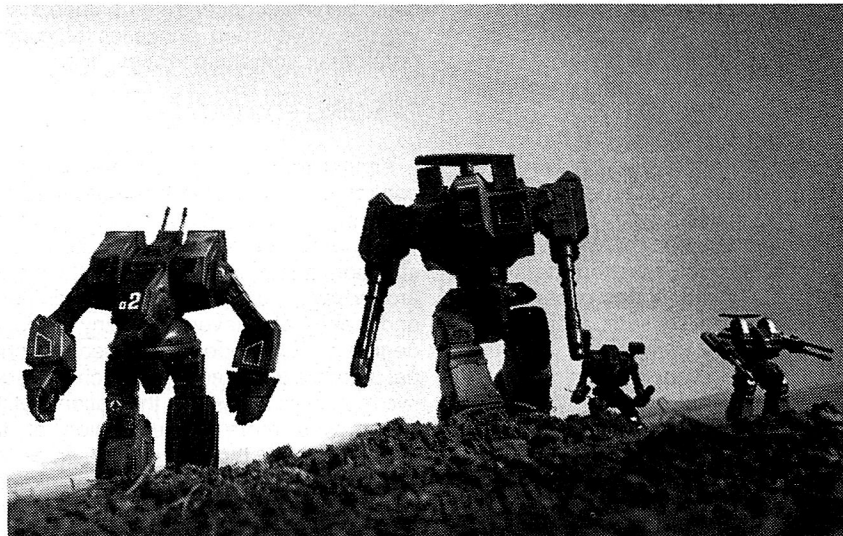
Institute of Science. Here a prospective MechWarrior receives years of intensive training in simulators and real 'Mechs; only the best soldiers—the ones “in tune”—graduate to become officers granted command of House-owned 'Mechs. In between these two extremes are any number of alternatives, each of them aimed at solving the basic problem of finding and training men and women who can take a 'Mech into combat, survive, and, along the way, overcome the opposition.

There are some schools of thought that maintain that the BattleMech is no different from any other weapon of war, that any soldier can learn to handle one effectively. But most MechWarriors feel otherwise. They know that they require more than just ordinary training to get the most out of their 'Mechs, and that the winner in any clash on the field of battle will always be the Warrior who does just that—melding man and machine into a single fighting unit that can out-think, out-maneuver, and out-fight an opponent.

BattleTechnology sought out Colonel Kuan Li-Po (Ret.), formerly an instructor at the NAIS and still a private consultant on MechWarrior training, for his views on what it takes to link mind and machine on the modern battlefield. What follows was based on our correspondent's discussions with the Colonel.

Today's MechWarriors are the heirs of six hundred years of experience in the Art of War; this is one of the longest periods in Mankind's history in which innovations in hardware have not forced a complete rethinking of strategic and tactical principles. Probably the only comparable period of stability is the era of Terra's Roman Empire, and even there several notable reforms were required to keep pace with the shifting nature of the Empire's enemies. From the invention of gunpowder in the Middle Ages, militechnics, and hence strategic and tactical thought, began changing at an ever-increasing rate. By the 20th Century this change was so rapid that the lessons of one war couldn't even be applied to the battlefields of the next, and the training of soldiers could be rendered obsolete over a matter of months because of new breakthroughs that made the old style of combat completely useless.

RIGHT: A BattleMech lance deploys, a 31st Century melding of mind and machine.



After the Second Russian Revolution and the Western Alliance's defeat of the Soviets in the early 21st Century, the pace of military development slowed to more reasonable levels. Although "the search for global peace" trumpeted as the goal of the Western Alliance was not really achieved, the post-Superpower era was a time of small-scale wars and limited military research, so there was little change in the way war was waged. Once Mankind reached the stars, the Alliance Colonial Marines became policemen rather than soldiers, their duties focused on security, riot control, and the occasional peace-keeping mission when some local power wanted to use violence to achieve an end. For over two hundred years warfare remained static.

The last major innovations in war as we know it came about between 2300 and 2500 A.D., when the dawning of the "Age of War" made interstellar conflicts common and the development of myomar and neuro-link technologies made possible the creation of the BattleMech. Although the tools of combat improved steadily thereafter, new developments were almost invariably refinements of existing systems rather than major breakthroughs. The BattleMech was and is the ultimate fighting machine, capable of translating an individual soldier's abilities into a force more than equal to an entire company of pre-Mech troops. With the coming of the BattleMech, warfare had finally "come of age" and military science

could begin to concentrate on understanding the established principles of combat rather than searching for new ones.

TRAINING FOR BATTLE

Almost from the start, there has been controversy over the mystique that surrounds the MechWarrior and his trade. WorkMechs for mining, agriculture, construction, and other heavy labor have been around even longer than the BattleMech, and these have never taken any particular degree of skill to operate. Indeed, the original principle that made the 'Mech so attractive in *all* of its forms was the notion that the 'Mech was more an extension of the operator's body than it was a machine that had to be driven. Thanks to neurolinkages, the motions of the machine were largely instinctual; controls were needed to avoid extraneous motion that would have accompanied purely thought-controlled systems, but the actual operating controls of a 'Mech were (and still are) simpler to understand than those in a family air car. Almost anyone can sit down in a 'Mech cockpit, tune in to a neurohelmet, and handle the machine competently after a minimum of training. The onboard computers even handle a lot of the training by being available to answer the pilot's questions on the spot.

But experts in the field of battle technology have long maintained that it takes more, much more, to turn the average soldier into

a true MechWarrior. And they are right.

The essentially unskilled operator can make a 'Mech move, even fight, in rough mimicry of his own capabilities. Against ordinary troops unsupported by better-prepared MechWarriors, that soldier will still be a force to be reckoned with. But it takes skill and practice to make the BattleMech respond efficiently to the operator's desires, especially in combat. The kind of training a MechWarrior goes through is not so much in how to *operate* his 'Mech, but rather in how to work *with* it. The more intensive the preparations, the more effective the ultimate union of man and machine.

Any program of MechWarrior training will have to focus on three important areas. Physical training toughens the body, improves the reflexes, and enables the Warrior to hone his personal fighting skills—and, in turn, the instinctual talents that will emerge when he handles his machine in battle. Operational training teaches him to understand and use his 'Mech, and includes the basics of Tech skills as well as the piloting and gunnery practice needed for controlling the BattleMech under almost any conditions. Finally, and perhaps most important, there is mental training; conditioning that helps the Warrior become a part of his 'Mech and focus all of his other abilities on the single task of fighting...and *winning*.

APPRENTICES AT ARMS Squires of the Modern Age

A fairly common method of MechWarrior training used throughout the Successor States today is the practice of apprenticeship, in which young candidates for a Warrior's position are taken in as part of a military household and given long and extensive training while acting as laborers or servants to the unit. The practice is particularly common in mercenary outfits and among aristocratic Warrior families and is the usual route by which children may succeed their parents in a family-owned 'Mech that might go back for generations.

The concept of apprenticeship in the warlike arts is almost certainly as old as the history of War itself, but it probably first achieved a degree of legitimacy in the days of Terra's Roman Empire. Once the Imperial legions became tied to specific frontier provinces, it was common practice for villages to spring

up near a legionary camp and for the children of the village—many of them born to soldiers and their local wives—to join the Legion at an early age and grow up as part of the unit with all of its traditions and legacies. It is likely that this practice was the source of the use of squires by Medieval knights (who were the direct heirs of the legionary heritage once the Roman units became cavalry, rather than infantry, formations) after the fall of the Empire and the rise of feudal Europe. As professional armies became the rule, the concept of apprentice soldiers began to die out; the last true holdouts in the practice were in the navies of the 19th Century, where midshipmen went to sea at an early age and became apprentice officers mastering their craft while actually serving in combat. The Napoleonic concept of professional armies, and especially the Prussian reserve system which

PHYSICAL TRAINING

The ideal MechWarrior should be in excellent physical shape, with reflexes and coordination in peak condition at all times. Because the neurohelmet draws upon the pilot's brain for the feedback that maintains balance and coordinates actions and reactions, the machine's responses will mirror the operator's. A slow or clumsy pilot will be hard-pressed to keep his 'Mech upright, much less fight. The physical training given to prospective MechWarriors is very often in the form of some martial arts discipline, stressing speed, timing, and coordination over sheer strength or power. MechWarriors who have gone through this sort of training are easily spotted by their grace and agility; they tend to move quickly but with an economy of effort that comes from being trained to use exactly the right amount of force on an opponent—never more than they actually need.

This kind of training makes the typical MechWarrior as lethal in hand-to-hand fighting as he is controlling a 'Mech, though of course on a much different scale. One reason why Dispossessed MechWarriors make such good scouts is this martial education. Nor is it wise to tackle a MechWarrior in a barroom brawl. Their training makes them tough opponents...and they are almost invariably taught to kill quickly, silently, efficiently, and above all *instinctively*.

MechWarrior training given at the NAIS

and other combat academies goes on to address a variety of other related areas. The use of a number of different personal weapons is often a part of these curricula, as is extensive training and practice in the areas of survival, evasion, and escape. These programs prepare the Warrior in case he or she is ever forced to abandon a 'Mech and function behind enemy lines. With highly skilled Warriors in nearly as short a supply as the machines themselves, most House and Mercenary units are as much concerned with getting pilots back in one piece as they are with salvaging damaged equipment, and courses like these are an important part of this concern.

OPERATIONAL TRAINING

We have already noted the overall ease of driving most 'Mechs. Nonetheless, it is important for the MechWarrior to become thoroughly familiar with the operation of these machines. To be an effective MechWarrior, the pilot must understand the BattleMech so thoroughly as to be able to run it entirely on instinct, leaving his mind free to concentrate on the needs of the battle. The soldier who has to think before he remembers which button to press or how many times he has operated the foot controls won't last long under fire.

Ideally, a Warrior should be able to strap into any 'Mech cockpit and handle it with equal skill. In fact, this isn't always the case;

though most 'Mechs handle very much alike, some—notably four-legged vehicles like the *Goliath* and the *Scorpion*, armless 'Mechs along the lines of the *Locust*, the *Cicada*, or the *Jenner*, and specialty craft such as LAMs—are significantly different in the way controls are set up and in the feel of the machine in motion. This means that the Warrior must either practice on a number of different machines to become an all-around pilot, or concentrate on a more narrow program to become proficient in a few and merely adequate in the rest.

Piloting is only the most basic of 'Mech operating skills. The Warrior must become familiar with gunnery and be able to choose in an instant the best weapons system to handle a given situation. He needs to understand communications systems, the computer and its capabilities, detection and tracking mechanisms: paraphernalia vital to 'Mech operation on the battlefield. The ability to interpret sensory data from radar blips to thermal prints to output scans is another aspect of this training. A MechWarrior who expects to survive will learn not only how to operate these controls, but how to use them even in pitch darkness, one-handed, and *without* computer assistance. There are even some schools that teach students to handle a 'Mech without the aid of a neurohelmet. Though without the neurolinkage the BattleMech is clumsy, still it might just be able to get in the battle-winning shot even after neurolinks are gone and the machine/

demanding universal formal military training among a nation's citizenry, tended to put an end to the more elitist notions of apprenticeship.

It was the revival of feudalism in the era of the BattleMech that brought the system back into prominence. Because a 'Mech is a scant resource that may be passed as a legacy from one generation to the next within a Warrior family, training in the use of that 'Mech is often very much a family affair. In similar fashion, ongoing manpower shortages in mercenary units and local military forces (as opposed to the more formally constituted House armies) often make it expedient to take in the very young and put them through a long-term training program. These youthful students earn their keep by helping technicians, acting as servants to the unit's fighting men, and serving as messengers, porters, cooks, bottlewashers, and anything else they are needed for.

Apprenticeship programs vary in quality according to the resources available for training. A very poor program will simply teach basic military concepts, physical training, and some mental discipline, with infrequent practice in actual 'Mech operation. The presence of specialist tutors, simulators, and other instructional aids can make apprenticeship at least as

worthwhile as any academy program. Some particularly good merc units and aristocratic families have turned out Warriors superior to anything the NAIS has produced. Grayson Death Carlyle, founder of the Gray Death Legion and one of the most notable young mercenary leaders on the scene today, was trained as an apprentice to his father using the resources of a fairly small but well-run unit.

The primary advantage to an apprentice training program is the length of time it generally runs. Candidates are taken in young, sometimes as early as 8 or 10 years old, and may not actually take over a 'Mech until they are in their twenties. With a decade of physical training, simulator experience, and exposure to the art of war, the candidate cannot help but be in superb physical, mental, and academic condition by the time he or she becomes a Warrior. However, apprenticeship is a very conservative form of training; it tends to perpetuate certain approaches to warfare from one generation to the next. It is also highly variable in quality from one place to another; it is often a matter of luck that determines whether ten years of fetching and carrying will pay off in exceptional training or lead to an academic dead end.



pilot combination has been completely severed.

Finally, many Warrior training courses provide at least a grounding in the technical side of battle technology. An old saying, dating back at least to Kerensky's time, maintains that "only a fool or a dirtfoot depends on somebody else to keep the gear in shape." It is a saying that is still valid today—no matter how good your Techs may be, you should never be completely ignorant when it comes to making repairs or modifications in the machine you'll be depending on to keep you alive when the laser pulses start to fly.

MENTAL TRAINING

Of all the areas of a Warrior's training, it is mental discipline which is both most important and least understood outside profes-

sional MechWarrior circles. Attitudes among the uninitiated vary from scorn to ignorance to misplaced awe, and even MechWarriors disagree among themselves as to the extent and exact nature of mental training required to ply their trade. But most agree that *some* form of training is necessary before a Warrior can learn to get the most out of his BattleMech in action.

The most basic of mental disciplines is simple training aimed at helping the MechWarrior channel and control his thoughts. The neurohelmet picks up and processes a variety of impulses directly from the brain and sometimes becomes overloaded by extraneous material that it cannot interpret as a specific command. The operator must learn to think clearly and precisely when issuing mental orders, or risk the consequences of a feedback loop. Men have been known to die from the effects of an

uncontrolled neurohelmet feedback loop that started with an inability to direct the flow of thoughts and commands to the 'Mech computer system.

It was the introduction of martial arts into the physical training of MechWarriors that led to the expansion of mental and philosophical instruction in the curricula of many major Warrior academies. Mental discipline—a whole way of looking at life and the universe—was and is inseparable from the fighting techniques of many of the martial arts, particularly those derived from the mystic Eastern cultures of Old Earth. The application of these methods to MechWarrior training was obvious almost from the start. They have been carried even further through subsequent refinements in outlook and teaching techniques. Even comparatively new martial arts schools, like the Quick-Kill taught at the NAIS and other

Federated Suns academies, place at least as much effort on preparation of the mind as they do on mastery of the body.

The aim of these areas of teaching is to help the MechWarrior fight more effectively by giving him total self-control. In the vast majority of these systems, the adept is able to suppress emotions like fear and hatred, control all of the voluntary and even some involuntary muscle functions, ignore the effects of extreme heat, cold, or pain, and allow his instinct, which generally cannot be mastered consciously, to flow freely in perfect interplay with the mind. Although few MechWarriors reach the status of true adept, all students trained under these methods are far superior to ordinary soldiers in almost every aspect of combat.

Mental control also brings together the other two aspects of training. The Warrior who can master his own mind can focus his physical responses more tightly and execute his operational training more efficiently than a 'Mech pilot who lacks this kind of self-discipline. And emotional control allows a Warrior to put aside anger or fear in a crisis and continue to function rationally when other soldiers would panic or give in to unreasoning hate. On the other hand, the MechWarrior adept can deliberately unleash the emotions and the chemical triggers that will turn an ordinary fighter into a modern-day berserker, although this often takes a terrible toll on the body after the moment has passed.

TECHNIQUES OF THE GREAT HOUSES

The quality and effectiveness of training techniques in the modern era vary widely. Even within the bounds of a given Successor State there may be vast differences in the way House units are taught, according to the availability of training facilities, manpower and supply needs, and unit traditions. Some general notes, however, can be applied in an overall survey of the military units of the five Great Houses.

House Liao: The Capellan Confederation probably has the least effective MechWarrior training programs. Pressed by manpower shortages and a strategic doctrine emphasizing a perimeter defense supported by a few elite mobile reserves, the bulk of the Capellan military is given only the bare minimum of training. A few core units, particularly the Red Lancers and elements of the Northwind Highlanders, do make use of fairly sophisticated MechWarrior training procedures. These units are often found employed as a strategic reserve, blunting threats to the Confederation

after less efficient forces have bought time against an invader.

Regular units are generally trained according to the age-old precepts of military service—3-4 months of general instruction which concentrates almost entirely on basics, followed (sometimes) by specialty schools that may hone particular skills to a finer edge. Training of this kind is often drastically shortened when a unit needs reinforcements in tune quickly. A leavening of mercenaries looking for the comparatively stable life of House service are often enticed into joining these forces as well. Some individual MechWarriors will enter Liao service with much more sophisticated training—if they happen to come from old 'Mech families with a particularly strong belief in the benefits of long and intense instruction in the Arts of War.

Elite units have higher standards. There

ing tradition of provincialism among its member-worlds. This means that the military, though controlled by House Marik through the office of Captain-General, varies in quality and in the techniques used in training its soldiery. Forces raised and maintained within the Duchy of Oriente receive the best training, but Duke Christopher's mistrust of education over experience has led to a curtailment of formal academic instruction even here. It is largely left to individual unit commanders to provide what they consider to be appropriate training to newcomers in their outfits. As in Liao space, there are a number of privately-owned military academies that provide various types of training to prospective MechWarriors (and others).

House Steiner: Within the Lyran Commonwealth there are several state-sponsored establishments for the training of

“Only a fool or a dirtfoot depends on somebody else to keep the gear in shape.”

are five established military academies within the boundaries of Liao space, including the renowned Tikonov Military Institute. Given the Capellan Confederation's tightly-ordered and highly militaristic system, it was inevitable that standards of training among these five should be more or less the same. Most elite Liao MechWarriors are graduates of one of these academies, all of which stress accepted tactical doctrine at the expense of individual initiative in combat.

The Tikonov Institute remains a model of superb MechWarrior training. The curriculum at TMI includes training in the martial arts fields of ju-jitsu and karate (or at least modern equivalents of these ancient disciplines) together with an intensive course in "The Golden Way," a collection of 26th Century philosophical precepts originally established by the Institute's founder, Colonel Kenji Matsumoto.

House Marik: The Free Worlds League, like the Capellan Confederation, lacks a centralized military training system, but for different reasons. Although the League is strong in terms of size and scope, it is fragmented politically by a long-stand-

MechWarriors. For the most part the official curriculum stresses the teaching of tactics and strategy to prospective officers, but they do include a study of the Neo-Zen philosophies of the late 28th Century, especially those which promise "the union of flesh and thought" through meditation and rigorous physical conditioning. The Commonwealth's military strength relies heavily on mercenary forces, however, and these units—along with local or militia troops which do not participate in the Lyran training program—are not given this sort of Warrior instruction. Moreover, roughly 80% of the graduates of these academies are officers; ordinary enlisted MechWarriors are given less sophisticated training that sticks more to the basics.

Since 3022, when Katrina Steiner completed her negotiations with the Federated Suns, a few picked Steiner MechWarriors have been eligible to enter competitions for placement in the New Avalon Institute of Science, which provides highly sophisticated training in the military arts. The NAIS program is described in detail with other Davion institutions.

House Kurita: Adhering to the Japanese traditions of House Kurita and other noble families, the military of the Draconis Combine receive, on the whole, some of the most effective Warrior training of any in the Successor States. A heavily modified version of the ancient Bushido code is central to the overall military training programs sponsored by the state; though not universal, such training is much more common here than in states such as the Capellan Confederation or the Free Worlds League.

The code of the Warrior in Kurita society urges excellence in the military sciences, but also a mastery of peaceful arts as well. Inner harmony is as important to the typical Kurita soldier as are accomplishments on the field of battle. Quite contrary to their common image as ruthless, bloodthirsty barbarians, Kurita soldiers are often encouraged to take up hobbies such as painting, calligraphy, or horticulture to put them "in touch with the inner self." A large percentage of Kurita MechWarriors do attend academies which inculcate the Bushido and Neo-Zen philosophies and provide training in any of several martial arts disciplines.

House Davion: Although the Federated Suns does not draw on the same Terro-Japanese heritage as the Draconis Combine, a martial tradition has long been fostered by the ruling Davion family which mirrors some features of the Kurita approach to military training while preserving many unique aspects of its own. State military academies are present on many of the major planets of the Federated Suns, each teaching the same basic Warrior's curriculum. Quick-Kill, a synthesis of karate, judo, aikido, and savate, is the central part of a Warrior's physical training; mental and philosophical disciplines form a part of the Quick-Kill course as well. Davion policy places heavy stress on actual operational instruction as well.

The most recent innovation in training in the Federated Suns was the foundation of the New Avalon Institute of Science (NAIS) in 3015. NAIS military training is an expanded form of the usual Davion academy courses, with the addition of extensive instruction in tactics, operations, strategy, and other leadership skills. Graduates of the NAIS are commissioned into the army of the Federated Suns; even failed NAIS students enter the ranks as NCOs. The Institute also has courses in non-military arts and sciences, and a combat curriculum for non-BattleMech officers as well. Since 3022, a few select students from the Lyran Commonwealth have also been permitted

to attend the NAIS; these are given commissions in the armed forces of their native realm and honorary Federated Suns ranks as well.

PLANS, TRENDS, AND INNOVATIONS: THE FUTURE OF MECHWARRIOR TRAINING

The future of 'Mech warfare viewed on the basis of recent developments is uncertain. It seems that after several hundred years of deadlock the chance for a decisive victory by one or another of the Great Houses may finally be at hand. The seeds for such a victory are contained within many of the contemporary developments in the Art of War which could, given proper exploitation, snowball into another rush of innovation that might rival the changes of the 19th and 20th Centuries. If this should happen, changes in the training of MechWarriors would inevitably be required; indeed, it could be trends in training techniques that will trigger the other changes and revolutionize military science as a whole.

Among the developments some experts see as heralding change are many factors. The deterioration of technology and industry on many of the war-ravaged worlds of the Successor State frontiers could lead to a major challenge in the balance of power; victory would then go to the realm which has established the best pool of salvaged resources and the best training to exploit their superiority on the battlefield. On the other hand a continued decline could lead to a gradual devolution in modern theories of warfare and, eventually, to barbarism. This situation is one to be closely watched in the years ahead.

More immediate trends could have a decisive effect long before the worst comes to pass, however. Recently, a new crop of young officers has appeared on the galactic stage, and these leaders of a new age are showing a tendency to break away from the tradition methods of waging war. Tactics of maneuver and static defense are slowly giving way to the unleashing of a new philosophy of total annihilation on the battlefield. To draw a comparison with Terra's early history, the Successor States may be on the verge of seeing a Napoleon bursting on the scene to transform warfare from the stately dance of the old ways of warfare to the crushing blows of the new. Leaders like Natasha Kerensky and Grayson Death Carlyle have already begun to demonstrate what aggressive tactics can do on the battlefield; it may be that MechWarriors everywhere will soon have to relearn their craft

entirely or perish under the weight of the new.

Other military theorists see a chance for revolution in the creation of the NAIS by House Davion. They, too, point to parallels in Earth's early history to suggest that the rise of a unified professional officer class could change the Successor States much as it did the Roman Empire, Renaissance Europe, or mid-19th Century America. When leadership on the field of battle becomes the prerogative of talent rather than the right of feudal privilege, the breakdown of old class barriers won't be far behind. Then the tactical innovators and the social reformers will alike be free to come forward, changing the face of modern society forever.

Even the experts cannot agree on a scenario for change, though most predict that it will come. But there are even some highly regarded pundits who reject the entire concept of future turnings in war and society. There is no sure way of predicting the truth; what 20th Century social historian would have advanced the notion of a centuries-long freeze in development? The only sure prognostication we can make is this: until change *does* arrive, 'Mechs and MechWarriors will continue to stand guard over our present civilization, and their training and prowess in battle will be the one certain gauge of victory or defeat.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Colonel Kuan Li-Po served as a MechWarrior in the Avalon Hussars for over thirty years, rising to the rank of Colonel and command of that unit in the year 3012. When the New Avalon Institute of Science was opened in 3015, Colonel Kuan was appointed one of the Institute's first instructors at the personal direction of Hanse Davion. In 3018, the Colonel served briefly as the Institute's Director of MechWarrior Training before retiring to private life at his estate on Chien in the Draconis March. The Colonel is the author of *Inner Fire*, a treatment of the use of mental control as a means of achieving physical perfection.

MechWarrior Keith Douglass was formerly a soldier of the New Syrtis Fusiliers. Now a *Griffin* pilot in Cockburn's Crusaders, a mercenary unit, Douglass is also a free-lance writer and part-time correspondent for BattleTechnology. He has two kill assists to his credit.

MASTERING THE INNER *FIRE*

The Mind as a Weapon

by Colonel Kuan Li-Po

The secrets of ultimate prowess in battle do not come from mastery of a machine but from a knowledge of the mind. We call ourselves MechWarriors, but the Warrior has always been and shall always be the heart and soul of the machine he guides in combat. If you would be victorious, learn to use the mind as the weapon it truly is.

Over thousands of generations, the human race has sought to place Mankind on a special level, elevated above the animal kingdom and separated from it by the powers of speech and reason. Many would have us believe that the mind is a weapon by virtue of its ability to outwit or out-think an opponent. Does this mean that Galileo, Einstein, and Fuchida were our greatest Warriors? No. The soldier cannot rely on the power of pure reason if he is to survive on the field of battle. Nor can he depend entirely upon technology. The smartest Warrior in Human Space, equipped with the most sophisticated computer known to man, may yet be overpowered by a stupid brute armed with a heavy stone as he ponders the variables of a thousand complex equations before unleashing his most devastating weaponry. Brains are of little value



to the Warrior if they are no longer contained within his broken skull.

We must reject the opinion that Man's mind differs from that of the animals, for in accepting such an idea we say that reason is always good and instinct always a sign of inferiority. But pure instinct, like pure reason, cannot be the proper road for the Warrior. Our instincts are one with our emotions, and when we feel pain or fear or hate, we lose control over our judgement and knowledge. The animal may fight ferociously when the odds are impossible,

***Hate blinds the Warrior to Opportunities;
Anger is the Gateway to Impatience.
Impatience is the Pathway to Defeat;
Opportunity is the Stepping-Stone to Victory.***

never realizing the value of postponing the battle, or it may run in fright because instinct tells it to flee even though reason might find the way to turn defeat into success. One man may outfight a dozen animals by the application of rational thought to the problems of combat.

The mind of Man is a *coupling* of instinct and reason. Trained in discipline and control, that mind can make conscious use of the abilities which make the animal dangerous. Call upon your mind, your spirit, and nothing need be denied to you. Combine the instinctive reactions that will give you speed and strength with the detached reasoning which is your heritage as Man and you shall be more than either alone could make you. This is the purpose of training the mind; to teach you to use *all* of your mental inheritance at once rather than in parts or at the behest of unreasoned emotion.

Before you can master the Spirit, you must learn to master your own emotions. If you fear, or if you hate, you cloud your reason and lose your judgement. Remember this precept and you shall contain your emotion, pass through it, and emerge at the end with your mastery intact. In the Quick-Kill teachings used in the [New Avalon] Institute [of Science], the student learns to banish hatred through the repetition of litanies designed to cleanse the mind and bolster the spirit. The First Rejection of Hate is the simplest of these, saying:

Hate blinds the Warrior to Opportunities;
Anger is the Gateway to Impatience.
Impatience is the Pathway to Defeat;
Opportunity is the Stepping-Stone to Victory.

The student learns others as well, so that Rejection becomes a matter of finding the

right trigger and using it to maintain control when emotion threatens to overpower the mind. With practice you can learn to place this control on the level of instinct itself, responding to any threat with its counter without even being consciously aware of the threat itself. This is the Freedom of Reason.

Second in the student's process of mastering the Inner Fire is the freeing of the instinct from the intellect. Once the Warrior can control emotional responses without thinking, he is ready to allow the animal within him to emerge and fight. With the banishment of harmful responses through inner balance, the animal instincts can be harnessed and made to perform at the command

of the trained mind. This training links together the senses, the reactions, the agility and the coordination of the Warrior into a unified whole. He sees, understands, decides, moves and reacts with the fluid grace of the tiger making a spring. If the knowledge of his craft is as ingrained as his mental discipline, he draws on this as freely as on any of the others and so becomes the living embodiment of Death. Exercise the reactions and the senses, hone the body to the peak of physical performance, and feel the essence of the world around you to achieve the Freedom of Instinct.

With these the student can be a powerful Warrior, yet with these alone the Warrior shall never be a true Adept of the Inner Fire. If you choose to strive for further mastery, further control, you shall ultimately achieve even greater powers of mind and body. For the body is only the servant of the mind; and what the mind envisions, the body can be made to do. Only the limits of understanding and belief will stand in the way of the Adept's aspirations. Thus can the Adept conquer pain and stimulate self-healing, and thus can he learn not only to control the emotions but to trigger and channel them at will in the single-minded rage of the berserker. Though it may take decades of study, though some may find it impossible to train their minds to the levels of discipline that will achieve the mastery, still the powers are there for the taking. Seek them out if you desire the Freedom of Spirit, but learn to use them wisely if you set out to use them at all.

[Editor's Note: Colonel Kuan is a Master in the art of Quick-Kill, the philosophical precepts of which he has outlined above. Despite this, the Colonel acknowledges that the "Freedom of Spirit" is something he himself has not yet fully achieved, so it is plain that the chances of the average Warrior to learn these pseudo-mystic powers of mental control (if they exist at all) are virtually nonexistent.]

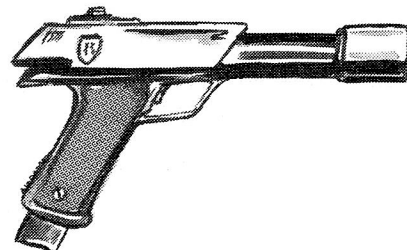


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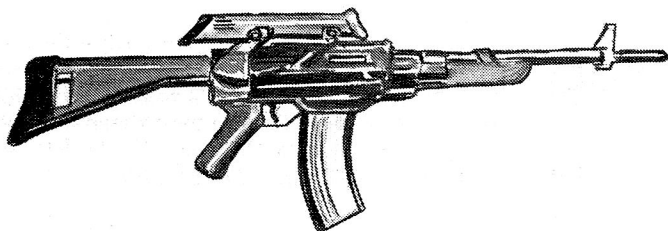
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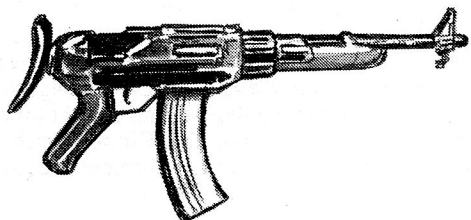
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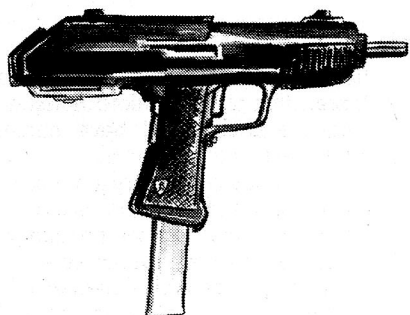
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Because your life depends on it.

Drop Into Hell

Combat Drop on Scheat V

by Captain Sinclair MacCray

Don't let them kid you. The worst part of a drop is always the waiting.

There you are, strapped immobile into the cockpit of your BattleMech. There's nothing to be seen through your vision ports but the blackness of the cocoon that envelopes your machine, no vid feed through your scanner screens because every lead save one was disconnected a small eternity ago.

That single remaining lead, a comline plugged into an external jack in the side of your 'Mech's head, is your only link with the universe outside, and you cling to that like the proverbial drowning man clings to a rope. Through that lead, a steady stream of chatter brings word of the situation outside from the DropShip's Tac Center, reports of altitude, vector, and bearing, of hostiles on intercept course and damage taken on the way in. But it's impersonal, that chatter, a recitation of facts and figures that have no emotional connection with you, as though the events they detailed were occurring a thousand light years away.

But when the DropShip bucks and kicks under the thunder of incoming missiles, that illusion is dispelled. You're helpless, blind, and nearly deaf, crammed into the breach of a giant cannon preparing to fire you into your target.

The roughest drop I ever experienced was carried out as part of Davion's push against Kurita along the cis-Klathandu Front in 3026. The powers-that-be of the House Davion Staff Command had decided that Scheat V was of some strategic impor-

tance. Hell, they were only supposed to be wargames, a small part of the mass insanity called Galahad '26, but there was fear that the Kuritists were mustering a major invasion force at Homam and Proserpina. Suddenly, the Davion Forward Operations Group needed a staging and resupply area for reserves and troop convoys, and Scheat, lying between Homam and Klathandu IV's Port Borea, was it.

The only problem was that Scheat V, the only habitable rock in the entire star system, was already occupied. Davion's IntelDiv had identified at least one full regiment of regulars, the crack Fourth Proserpina Husars. We all knew the Kurita staff command could read a star map as well as we could. The Fourth had been brought in to counter just such a move as we were about to make.

They would be waiting for us, no question about it.

Our battle plan called for an initial strike by one battalion at selected targets across Scheat V's southern hemisphere. They would drop from space, seize key spaceports, airfields, and ground defense complexes, and hold them until the three regiments which made up the main body of the invasion force could be brought in to relieve them. The battalion nominated for this singular honor was the Second Battalion, Deneb Light Cavalry, and my own Company A, 2nd Battalion, Wiley's Wolverines, would lead the drop. At the time, I was slotted in the Wolverine's Fire Lance, number three spot, a position which was certain

to give me a very close view indeed of the situation as it unfolded.

Maybe, I thought, a bit too close of a view.

Scheat is an M-class red giant, visible from old Earth as the star Beta Pegasi. Like many red giants, it is variable, but a mad-deniably unpredictable one which can double its luminosity in the course of a week or two, but refuses to behave according to any set pattern.

You can imagine what the weather is like. Planet V is the only habitable world in the system, and I use the word "habitable" advisedly. The air is breathable, there's hardy native life of a sort, and humans live there...though why is more than I know. The locals, I understand, have named their world Hell.

Hell circles its primary just barely within what might charitably be called the star's habitable zone. By comparison with the other worlds in the system, the place is a paradise. There is air—tainted with sulfur and the sharp, acid tang of ozone, but breathable. The temperature exceeds 50° C. only at the equator. And there is water—small landlocked seas foul with dilute concentrations of sulfuric acid and sulfur compounds, but supporting an amazing tangle of plant and animal life forms.

And there are the cities.

The Seven Cities of Hell, as they've been called, date back to early Star League times when Scheat V—Hell—was an important source of heavy metals and transuranics for an advanced, starfaring technology. There

once were dozens of major cities on the planet, of course, but today all but seven are gone, wiped away. The glassy crater plains and fused rubble left by the unrestrained horrors of the First and Second Successor State Wars mar Hell's face like some hideous, cosmic blight. For centuries now, the surviving cities have lived a ragged and marginal existence, providing radioactives and grain for Kurita's empire and a strategic nexus in the trade network of the Proserpina Sector.

I knew all of this, of course, from our pre-mission briefings.

There was something else we knew from our briefings...and from our regimental history. The Deneb Light Cavalry had faced the Fourth Proserpina Hussars before, on neighboring Proserpina.

Our unit had taken a licking there at the Battle of Hanser's Ford in 2840, when two lances of Kurita *Stinger* LAMs had set down in our rear. The Fourth Hussars had been at Hanser's Ford, too. Hell, this raid would be like old home week. We were eager to come to grips with our old opponents.

But fire and steel have a way of trampling eagerness into the mud. Wiley's Wolverines would be the tip of the sword thrust designed to pin the Fourth Hussars in place while Davion's invasion forces deployed to surround them and grind them down. The strategists called our part in the plan ADEP, with us as the IST. That translated as "Advanced Deployment" of the "Initial Strike Team." With the odds we were facing, we developed different names for the situation. AWKDEP—Awkward Deployment—of "Idiot Slow Targets" was my favorite.

Still, things started off well. There had been scant resistance at the system's nadir Jump Point when our invasion fleet slipped out of JumpSpace and deployed its light sails. But as the nine DropShips of our battalion formed up and boosted for Hell, we knew the locals were planning a welcome for us in the thin, cold air above the planet itself.

It's in the near approach for deployment that DropShips are at their most vulnerable.

It's possible to feel vulnerable in a BattleMech, you know. Ask one of us who has been on a combat drop. Sealed into your 'Mech, immobile, swaddled in ablative cocoon, cut off from the outside except for your audio feed from the bridge...

"*Shilones three at three-two-niner-low, approach vector theta.*" I concentrated on the words, trying to convert words and numbers to pictures in my mind. "*Range fifteen hundred and closing...*"

Shilones. SL-17s, big, heavily-armed and armored, and very, very mean. At moments

like these, a warrior's only consolation is that he is only one of a number of targets. There were eight other DropShips out there on approach, along with *Condottiere*, our own ship. That many targets could make the defenders scatter their shots, could confuse ground-based target designators already hard-pressed by ECM and fear.

"*Code Red! Missile launch! Shigs on intercept!*"

Those would be Shigunga long-range missiles. *Shilones* carried twenty of those killers apiece and reloads for twelve more. How many had been launched?

"*Alter course to zero-three-zero.*" That was Captain Delacroix's voice. I'd shipped with her aboard *Condottiere* on three previous missions, including the fiasco at Dohenac. The ice in her voice did wonders to cool thoughts and tempers raised to feverish levels by helpless inactivity. "*Pitch down five degrees. Weapons fire as you bear.*"

The launch tubes of a *Union*-class DropShip are well-protected, but the hammer of the ship's heavy autocannon rang through her armor and into my padded hiding place like jackhammer blows of raw, thundering noise. Between bursts of auto-fire mayhem, I could feel the much more gentle *whoosh-chunk* of missiles being fired, and fresh loads being slammed into emptied tubes.

"*Eleven Shigs, range four hundred!*"

"*Acknowledged! Evasive maneuvers, full acceleration and course change to zero-two-five, on my mark...three...two...one...*"

**"Again the hammer blows wracked my body...
Again I felt as though I were plunging aimlessly
into a suddenly yawning abyss."**

MARK!"

The surge of acceleration ramming me down into the padding of my 'Mech's command seat coincided with a waterfall roar, a cascade of thunder that hammered at my brain. *Condottiere* staggered, and the heaviness of acceleration was replaced for one agonizing instant by abrupt free-fall.

"*Damage control reports starboard autocannon destroyed. Light damage to sections five and seven!*"

"*Acknowledged! All stations stand by! Incoming missiles at three hundred! Evasive maneuvers at two...one...MARK!*"

Again the hammer blows wracked my body but far worse this time. Again I felt as though I were plunging aimlessly into a

suddenly yawning abyss, and it felt as though my entire 'Mech had shifted hard to one side. I could hear the faint yammer of an alarm tinning through my comline.

"*Emergency! Emergency! Fire in the bay!*"

Sweat was running freely down my face now, but my neurohelmet prevented me from wiping it away. "The bay" could only be *Condottiere's* BattleMech bay, the large, central area where the ship's twelve 'Mechs were encrypted in their entry pods, awaiting launch. One of the enemy missiles must have penetrated a weak point in *Condottiere's* armored hull and burst in among the readied 'Mechs.

"*Damage control parties report fires under control,*" Captain Delacroix's voice continued after several eternities of waiting. "*Mech bay area is now in vacuum, open to space. Major Wiley?*"

"*Wiley here.*" I could hear the skipper's voice, his answer barely audible as the bridge mike picked it up off a console speaker. The "Major" was, in fact, a captain. Long, long tradition held that passengers aboard warships holding the rank of captain received an honorary, temporary, and strictly unofficial "promotion" to major as long as they were on board. There can be only one captain aboard a ship.

"*You'll be dropping one 'Mech short. That last barrage sent three warheads right up Number Five launch tube and jammed the feeder mechanism.*"

"*Is Coulter all right?*"

"*No information, Major. We've lost his comline.*"

"*I copy. Dunbar, meet me on Command Three.*"

There was a click and a long silence as Wiley switched frequencies to consult with my lance leader.

Was Coulter alive? Jared Coulter was the number two man in my lance. His launch tube was opposite mine in the drop bay. Protected both by his *Warhammer* and by its cocoon when those missiles hit, he was probably okay.

Probably. That is a terrible word in combat.

A moment later, Lieutenant Dunbar's voice came across my comlink.

"MacCray? You heard?"

"I was listening, Lieutenant."

"You're my number two, now. Deploy on my right, and keep close."

"Yes, Ma'am. On your right." Lieutenant Kathryn Dunbar had a reputation for moving fast and hitting hard in combat. She expected her Number Two to stick like plate sealant.

"Stand by," Captain Delacroix's voice interrupted. "We've acquired the DZ on our screens, Major. Three minutes to drop."

"Three minutes," Wiley replied, "Understood."

Three minutes can seem like three years. *Condottiere* was shrieking in at a flat angle through the thin, cold, near-vacuum almost one hundred kilometers above the surface of Hell. Somewhere out there in that almost-nothingness were a swarm of angry *Shilones* and God knew what else, closing on our little squadron of DropShips at the moment when they couldn't maneuver to avoid incoming fire.

But at moments like that, you save your deepest worries for the captain of your DropShip. Did Captain Delacroix have the right target?

I'd studied maps and holoviews of Scheat V endlessly during the transit from Port Borea to our JumpPoint, along with the rest of the company. Most of the surface area is sand dunes, badlands, sulfur marshes, and

mountains. There's a chain of seas across the south pole—deep-water saline lakes, actually—fed by rivers from the surrounding mountains, and it was there that the planet's major port and military facilities were located. There were farming communities scattered along the coastlines and big, sprawling industrial plants among the sulfide flats at the Deep Desert's edge.

There were no pathfinders on this landing, no local troops or guerrillas on our side to place transmitters to guide us in. Captain Delacroix was navigating to the launch point by picking out terrain features and comparing them with the readings coming off star sightings. *Condottiere's* ground-imaging radar would be serving as a second check, painting hard, reflective targets such as spaceport buildings and industrial plants as sharply brilliant tracings on the radar mapping screen on the bridge. If Scheat V had been shrouded by cloud cover, Captain Delacroix would have been depending on that radar as her *only* navigational tool.

But the enemy could have set up fake radar targets, could have masked targets in camouflage which swallowed radar waves whole, could have set up whole illusory cities to misguide an incoming strike. And there were all too many cases of planetary maps being wrong.

But where we landed was entirely in the Captain's hands.

"Thirty seconds to drop!" Her voice was still steady, still cold as glacial ice. "Drop altitude will be ninety-five point two kilometers, speed one point one two kilometers per second. Deceleration time twenty-seven seconds. Your release vector will be zero-two-one, timed at point three second intervals."

Seconds dwindled away. I fancied I could hear the keening shriek of thin atmosphere against the hull surfaces of *Condottiere*, now...though I knew that the sound existed only in my imagination.

Captain Delacroix's voice came into my earphones one last time. "Ten seconds, people." For the first time, I heard some emotion behind those words. I wondered if I would see her again, at pick-up. "Five seconds! Good luck!"

A giant's hand smashed me back against the yielding surface of my cockpit seat as *Condottiere* decelerated with brutal fury. For endless, agonizing moments, the weight of five grown men pressed down on me. Breathing became difficult, then painful, then impossible as the crushing pressure made each breath an agony. The pressure went on and on and on. A kind of shadow crept across my vision, making my cockpit instrumentation dim. The shadow grew darker as the blood drained from my head, and I wavered on the ragged edge of unconsciousness.

Twenty-seven seconds at six gravities can seem a lifetime.

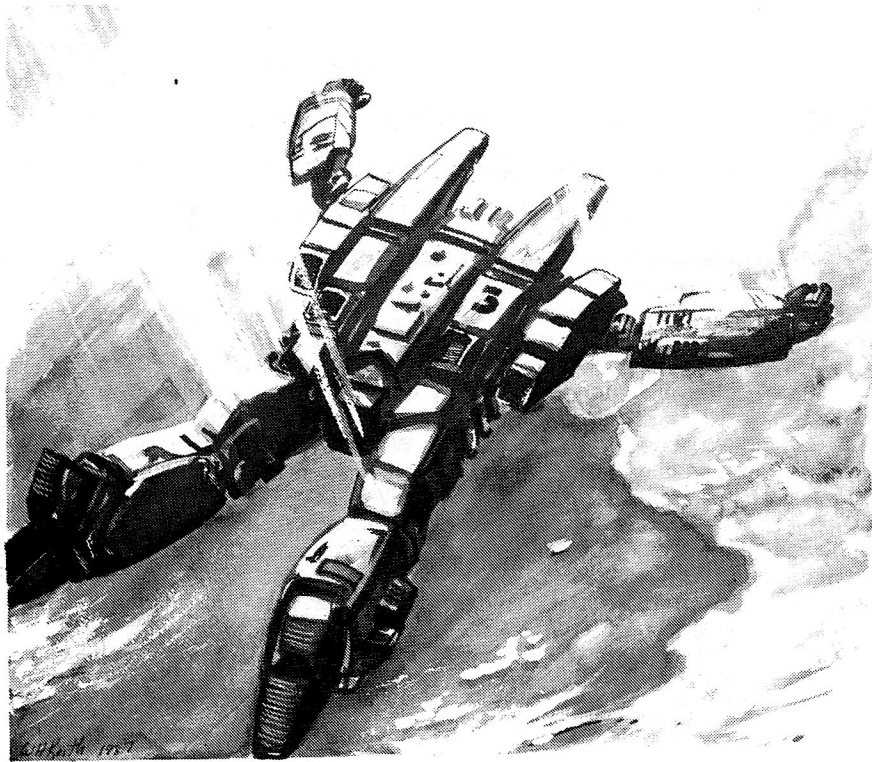
Then the pressure was gone, wiped away by the emptiness of free fall.

Far, far off in the darkness, I heard a stuttering, thundering, rapid-fire thudthudthud as the DropShip's launch tubes began firing according to the program punched in by Captain Delacroix, and then a monolithic WHAM as my capsule rocketed out into the void.

The blood-tinged silence which followed was sheer bliss, almost restful if not for the knowledge that I was now hurtling through near-vacuum almost a hundred clicks above very hostile ground.

And falling.

The DropShip's forward speed had been a bit over one click per second when Delacroix kicked us clear. Her firing pattern would have been aimed and timed in such a way that the firing of our capsules actually slowed our forward velocity, our "Launch Vector-V," to less than half a kilometer per second, though the exact figure could vary wildly depending on any maneuvers the Captain had been forced to execute during the final seconds of approach. That speed represented my movement relative to a stationary point on the planet's surface and



allowed for such factors as Hell's rotation on its axis and its movement around its sun. Half a kps was still a hefty speed—something like 1700 kilometers per hour. I would have to shed that speed on the way down if I didn't want to burn up—or wind up spread in a very fine film of dust across the face of a mountain.

And at the same time, my speed straight down was increasing at the rate of about one meter per second, every second.

The curious thing about a BattleMech

big, hot droplets. Both together provide a safe means for a BattleMech to enter a planetary atmosphere at high speed and survive the heat of friction. BattleMech drops at low altitudes can dispense with the pod, but cocoons are nearly always employed.

My link with the bridge of *Condottiere* was gone, now, and as yet I had no radio communication with the other 'Mechs in my company. Radio communication wouldn't have been any use as yet in any case. In

of 'Mech and entry gear and my speed would stop climbing. That point is called terminal velocity, a term I have always felt was a singularly unhappy choice of words.

The calculations had all been worked out long before, during our DropShip passage from the JumpPoint to Scheat V. With all factors taken into account, it would take me about twelve minutes to fall 95 kilometers.

I settled back to wait. Not all of that time would be spent wrapped helpless in my cocoon. The time was coming when I would

“Did Captain Delacroix have the right target?”

combat drop is that, at first, you don't feel like you're moving. You still can't see outside your cocoon, and even if you could, the surface of the planet, spread out in a vast and hazy, cloud-swept curve beneath you, would appear unmoving. A DropPod's speed is slow enough for it to provide a tempting target to a planet's air and ground defenses, and for the first part of the capsule's fall, it can't shoot back or even maneuver. For that reason, the launch of each capsule includes a burst of chaff, a cloud of mylar-coated slivers which play hob with the enemy's tracking radar, transforming a tight cluster of ten or twelve 'Mech-sized blips into a sea of shimmering, staticky fuzz. A part of every MechWarrior's training is to spend time looking over the shoulders of tracking radar operators on the ground during a training drop, just so he'll have some idea of how hard it is to make sense of radar signals bouncing back off chaff one hundred clicks up.

At least, that's the idea. Me, I still feel stark naked when I start my fall out of the sky, and I suspect that every other MechWarrior who has ever gone through the same drill feels precisely the same way.

The earliest spacecraft re-entered Earth's atmosphere by riding down a trail of fire on a heat shield, a thick metal plate which boiled away, bit by bit, carrying the heat of re-entry safely clear of the pilot in his thin-skinned capsule. Later spacecraft used meticulously fitted and placed ceramic tiles to insulate the craft from the heat. BattleMech entry pods combine elements of both old systems. The pod is the blunt-ended ceramic-and-metal capsule which encases the 'Mech and its cocoon. The cocoon is spun foam metal and ceramic designed to insulate while it melts away in

moments, as my speed through the upper atmosphere increased, a glowing plume of ionization encased my pod, making radio transmission or reception impossible. The silent peace was replaced, distantly and subtly at first, by a faint murmur of air boiling past the pod's surface. Within seconds the murmur had grown to a faint shriek, then to a keening whine, and finally to a buffeting roar which filled the cockpit of my 'Mech with a thundering banshee howl.

I shut out the noise, concentrating instead on the LED display on my instrument console which indicated computed altitude.

Computed altitude. DropPods don't have external sensors. If they did, the entry friction would burn them away, and in any case entry rigs are expensive enough without adding a lot of high-tech and disposable gadgetry to them. So there were no laser pulse rangefinders, no microwave scanners, no radar which could show my actual altitude above the ground. What I *did* have were certain basic data: my altitude at release and the strength of Scheat V's gravitational field, plus one of Man's most basic and vital tools—mathematics.

The planet's 1.01 G gravity was increasing my planetward speed by 992 centimeters per second per second. That meant that one second after drop I was falling almost a meter a second, after five seconds I was moving five meters per second, after one minute I was moving 60 meters per second...

At that rate, if Hell had been an airless moon, I'd have smacked into the surface seven and a quarter minutes after drop with a speed of over 15,000 kilometers per hour.

But Hell has an atmosphere. At some point I would enter air thick enough to offer resistance to my plummeting 85-plus tons

be able to become an active participant in what was happening around me.

After three minutes, the turbulence caused by my passage through increasingly dense atmosphere began building, beginning as a gentle rattle which built quickly into a hammering, bone-jarring assault on mind and body. At terminal velocity now, my pod cleaved through violently protesting air towards the planet's surface, arrowing ahead of a billowing plume of steam shocked from the cold air in my wake. The thunder inside my 'Mech increased, piling decibel upon decibel, the roar threatening to shake and batter my *Crusader* into pieces long before it reached the surface. Despite the layers of insulation, the interior temperature was climbing now. The 'Mech's reactor and power systems are running, producing megacalories of waste heat. Worse, a 'Mech's heat sinks cannot function inside a cocoon, since there is no place for the heat to go.

And it wasn't entirely my imagination which noted that the near-solar temperatures of the outer surface of that thin metal pod around me seemed to be working their way in through layers of insulation towards the tiny haven of relative comfort at the heart of the plunging meteor.

I tried not to think about heat.

Seven minutes to go.

The DropPod split open in five equal sections, as timed explosions severed links and opened the capsule like a blossoming, flame-wreathed flower. The petals separated, tumbling in their own fiery trajectories, adding—I most sincerely hoped—to the worries of any Draco observers on the surface. The chaff discharged during our launch would have dispersed by now, left somewhere far overhead. The pod sections

would provide some additional targets for enemy ground and aerospace fire.

The cocoon glowed with cherry-red heat, flooding the inside of my *Crusader's* cockpit with ruddy light. My internal temperature was climbing now. I could feel the personal refrigeration unit behind my seat click on, pumping coolant through the vest encasing my torso. Outside, the cocoon was shredding away a little at a time. Each half-molten globbet carried its quota of heat away from me—and contributed to the cloud of radar-reflective debris surrounding my 'Mech.

Four minutes.

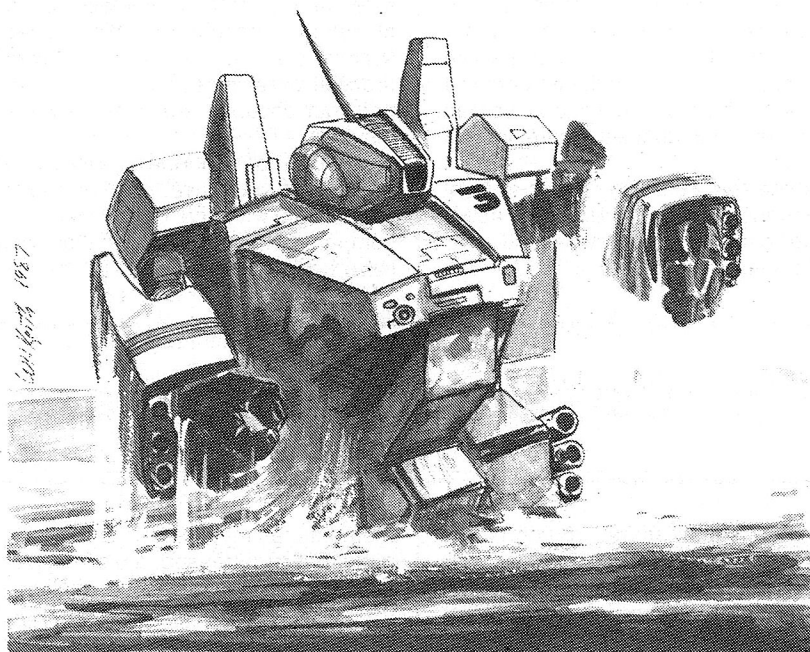
I touched a button on the console, and the aluminum framework which supported the cocoon exploded in a whirlwind of flaming debris. My *Crusader* fell free, trailing fire, and for the first time I could look out the cockpit's windshield and see my objective. Hell's horizon tilted up at me, a vast curve of cloud-smears and ocher. I was tumbling slightly. The landscape shifted, swept up past my face, was replaced by violet sky, then returned.

My 'Mech's radar had a clear path now. The return set my altitude at fifteen kilometers. It was time for the next phase of the drop.

I closed my eyes, concentrating on the input through my neurohelmet rather than what my eyes told me. Through the helmet network, I could sense the 'Mech's position and balance. I touched my attitude controls. This took a delicate touch. One wrong move and my gentle tumble would become a helpless, out-of-control, head-for-heels plummet which I would never be able to control.

Crusaders are not equipped with jumpjets. For drops from space or high altitude, *Crusaders*, *Marauders*, and other jetless 'Mechs must rely on strap-on thruster packs. Where things get touchy is in the fuel department. My *Crusader* carried only enough fuel for about 70 seconds of firing. Use too much, too soon, and there wouldn't be enough left of my *Crusader* to provide spare parts for a wind-up toy.

Feeling the attitude of my 'Mech through the neurohelmet, I gauged the proper moment, then let my thumb caress the jet controls. There was a cough from the thrusters mounted on either side of the 'Mech's backpack fusion plant, then an accelerating whine. I counted seconds... *two...three...four...* then cut the power. Gently, gently, I spread the *Crusader's* arms and legs, assuming the classic spread-eagle position of sky divers and HALO jumpers. My tumble slowed, steadied...then stopped. The ground below filled my faceplate. A landlocked sea,



edged by the reds and greens of local vegetation, spread itself across the desert directly below.

Now I felt more naked than ever. Theoretically I would be able to return fire if an enemy aerospace fighter made a pass at me, but in practice the attempt would most likely hurl me out of control. My main protection was the fact that the sky was still full of debris from my capsule and disintegrating cocoon—and the other 'Mechs in my unit—and that so far as ground fire control was concerned, I was just one target among many. When all you can see in front of you is clouds and ground and clear air, that is very thin consolation indeed.

I punched up the map of my target area stored in my computer and began trying to orient myself. That water below me ought to be the Thanatos Sea, but the shape of the coastline was wrong, and it seemed quite a lot bigger than it should have been. Was that twisting ribbon of plant growth through the desert the Styx? The Wolverine's assigned DZ was a labyrinth of buildings, installations, and a spaceport which had been codenamed the Cerberus Complex. Cerberus straddled the Styx River ten kilometers north of the Thanatos Sea.

I estimated ten kilometers up the river valley and saw barren desert, where the river carved its way through badlands down out of the mountains. Nothing matched what was on my map. *Nothing.* There was what looked like a small town close by the

mouth of the river, glittering silver and white in the light from Hell's sun. Could *that* be Cerberus? So near the sea?

There were no other targets in sight at all. The other 'Mechs in the company were coming to the same realization. My radio spat static, then resolved into Captain Wiley's voice on the combat channel. "*Red Company, this is Red Leader.*" Red Company was battlespeech for the Wolverines. Alpha, Beta, and Gamma were our three lances. "*Do any of you have a confirmed fix on our DZ?*"

A chorus of negatives came back over the open channel. "*Maybe the Condo put us down in the wrong spot,*" someone suggested.

As DropShip skippers go, Delacroix was the best. A BattleMech company has to rely on its DropShip pilot with an almost fanatical trust. But a planet is one hell of a big place, and a 'Mech DZ is vanishingly small. Could our approach and launch have been malfed up? And what could we do if they had?

"*All Reds,*" Wiley continued. "*Target on the complex at the mouth of the river. We will assume that that is Cerberus.*"

We acknowledged but with considerable misgivings. If that target was not the Cerberus complex, it might be days—even weeks—before we could be relieved, if ever. That was a long time for one company to hold off superior numbers deep behind enemy lines.

At five kilometers I tucked in my legs and

arms, rolled to an upright stance, and triggered my jets for a long, long twenty-second burst. The ground was sweeping up towards me now, and it was clear that I was well out over the sea. I needed to slow my descent enough to maneuver. I spread my arms and legs, riding the pressure of the uprushing air itself in ponderous and rapidly-descending flight.

Something flashed brighter than the white sun of Scheat, close above me and towards the left. I checked my monitors and saw the telltale contrail of an enemy aerospace fighter circling into position. My computer sorted through schematics in its file and snatched up one that matched. Lines of green light drew plan and profile views across a screen. It was an SL-17 *Shilone*.

That was bad. Its narrow, flying-wing shape narrowed further as it swung nose-on, lining up for another pass.

I waited, counting to myself, watching for what I thought would be the moment the *Shilone* would open fire. I was holding...holding...the flying wing swelling in my number two scanner screen...

Then I tucked in my arms and legs with a snap and let myself plummet. Sun's fire seared through the air above me, scorching the space where I had been an instant before. Something metallic rattled off my *Crusader's* back armor in a clattering rain of fragments, and then the air was filled by the screeching wail of the *Shilone* passing at high speed close by.

I shifted around, stabbing at the arming switch for my Magna Longbow missile racks, but the turbulence of the *Shilone's* passage had left me tumbling again. The target was gone before I could locate it.

I let myself fall for a long way before I extended my arms and brought my 'Mech under control again. The water was much closer now—four kilometers below—a muddy brown-green color close enough for me to make out the slowly moving march of wave swells across its surface. At this point, any thought of steering for Cerberus was lost. All I wanted to do was avoid hitting the water.

And *that* looked impossible.

I used my head scanners, checking wildly tilted views in all directions. There! I could make out the ochre blur of land, three kilometers to the north!

I kept my *Crusader* in its extended position, angled into a slightly heads-up attitude, and triggered my thrusters. The idea was both to slow my descent and to provide lateral thrust towards what should be the nearest land. Unfortunately, BattleMechs are not designed as flying machines. The

attempt gulped down fuel at a prodigious rate, while performing neither maneuver well. I continued to fall. I called for a position fix on the combat frequency but could hear only bits and pieces of broken conversation heavily filtered by static. The other Wolverines would be busy with their own landing maneuvers right now, and it was possible that the enemy was jamming us. I tried not to think of the other possibility—that one of the *Shilone's* near misses had damaged my radio.

I kept firing the jets, my eye on the LED displays which marked firing time and fuel remaining. Forty seconds gone...fifty...fifty-five...I cut power to the jets again and let myself fall. The surface of the water surged up to meet me. No matter what I did, I was going to land in the water.

'Mechs can move under water, though not quickly, and not well. If I became completely submerged, it might take days or even weeks of painstaking movement to make my way to the nearest land. Days from now, I might emerge from the water to find the battle long since lost, my comrades dead or departed. Worse, I was carrying emergency rations aboard my *Crusader*, but those would last for no more than a week. I might rise from the waves three weeks from now—weak and sick from lack of food.

One kilometer.

The water looked funny from this altitude. In places, the surging procession of waves was broken, as though by something just under the surface.

Just under the surface...

Fresh beads of sweat broke out across my forehead. The approved method for landing a 'Mech in water is to use the thrusters to reduce speed to zero just above the surface, then drop freely, allowing the water to absorb the impact of landing. The approved technique for setting down on land is to slow to as close to zero speed as possible, but with enough fuel remaining to gently lower the 'Mech all the way to the ground and cushion the actual landing. The difference between the two approaches is subtle but critical: an uncushioned landing on solid ground can smash a 'Mech's legs, can at the least jar sensitive instrumentation and weapons out of alignment or render the pilot *hors de combat* without a shot being fired. Using all your fuel trying for a soft touchdown on water can leave you without any fuel at all to control your descent through deep water. You could end up a hundred meters down, head stuck in the mud, and no way to right yourself. With my fuel reserves already critical, I had been preparing for a water landing, trusting in the

depth of the water to cushion the final impact but holding back enough fuel to control my descent to the bottom. Kilometers from land, the water *ought* to be quite deep... but...

I fired my jets in short, snapping bursts, my *Crusader* fully upright now, no longer positioned to reach the shore. My gut feeling was that the water below was deceptively shallow, perhaps no more than a few meters deep. I would use all my remaining fuel to cushion my landing. If I guessed wrong, I might wind up trapped on the bottom, beyond the help of friend or enemy.

With ten seconds of fuel remaining, at an altitude of fifty meters, I opened the throttles wide and rode twin jets of ravening flame down out of the sky. Steam rose in a boiling cloud which clung to my cockpit windscreen, blinding me again. The thrusters sputtered, cleared, then failed with a despairing moan. My 'Mech dropped, fuel exhausted. I felt the jar as my *Crusader's* feet hit the water, felt the far more profound jar as the feet touched bottom. The impact drove me hard into my seat, and metal rang and creaked ominously.

Then...silence.

Water streamed from my windscreen. My 'Mech was standing in five meters of water, with waves breaking at about the height of the *Crusader's* waist. I had been right! If I'd attempted a water landing, it could have been a disaster.

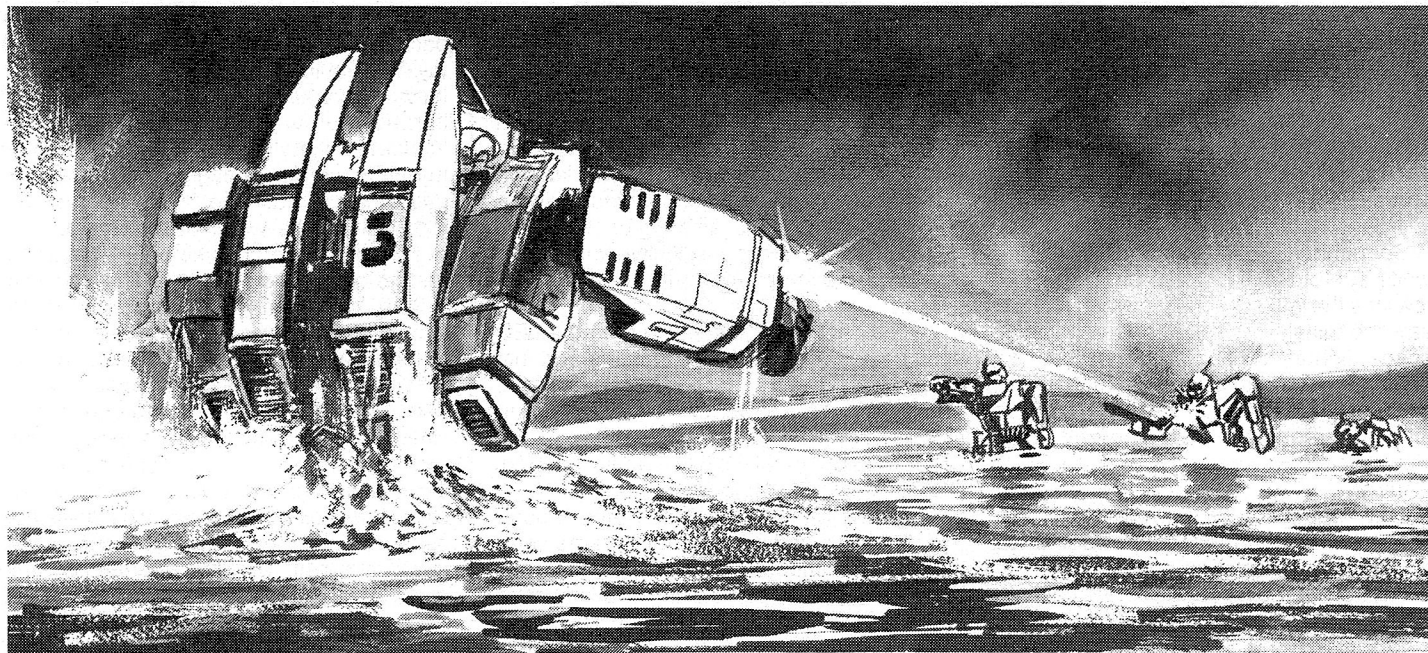
I checked my compass and searched the horizon. I could make out the blur of mountains, the raw edge of color marking land. There was a smudge of gray against the sky, smoke rising from multiple fires. The battle had begun without me. My tangle with the *Shilone* had separated me from the other Wolverines, of course. They must have set down quite close to the target city, while my brief but uncontrolled plummet had taken me too low too quickly for me to maneuver into a good approach for touch down. I gripped the *Crusader's* piloting controls and set its massive legs in motion. Leaving a wake of spray and roiling water, I moved towards the combat zone.

At least I didn't have to worry about overheating while travelling.

The reason our maps had not matched the terrain was obvious now. The Draco forces occupying Hell must have expected an attack, must have engineered a way of flooding the coastlands along the Thanatos Sea.

The static on the command channel cleared, the jamming lifted.

The company had landed in a hot DZ. The radio chatter on our combat frequency pre-



sented an unfolding tale of swift and shocking defeat.

"Red Alpha Three, this is Red Leader," I heard. "Circle left! Wasps on your Six!"

"Copy, Red Leader! Red Beta One down, requires assist!"

"Red Leader, this is Red Gamma One! Watch it! Watch it!"

"This is Beta Four. I'm on them..."

"Watch out, Four! Two Orions, on your five, coming from behind those buildings! Watch it...watch..."

"Alpha Four, this is Red Leader. Check Alpha Two. He's down hard and smoking..."

And so it went. By the time I neared the shore, four of the Wolverine's 'Mechs were out of the fight, not counting myself. That left six still in the fight, and they had been backed into a narrow semicircle near the water's edge, not far from the banks of the Styx.

My motion sensors detected movement not far ahead. I turned my 'Mech, crouching low in the water. Through the drifting tatters of smoke which masked the battlefield, I could make out four ghostly shapes lurching above frothing wakes. They were light 'Mechs, three *Stingers* and a 35-ton *Panther*, and they were heading directly across my line of sight.

Their strategy was obvious. While heavier forces kept the Wolverines pinned on the shore, these four were circling through the water to close on my comrades from behind. If the Wolverines attempted to retreat into the water, they would be caught by fire

from these four, thrown into confusion, their formation broken. If they stayed where they were, they would be surrounded and forced to surrender or die in a hellish crossfire.

There was little in the way of cover here. The water was waist-deep on a 'Mech, the bottom muddy but firm. Here and there rocks or the remnants of trees protruded a meter or two above the surface, but there was no place for a ten-meter tall BattleMech to hide.

Or was there?

The sea covered what had been land. The Styx had once wound south across this otherwise nearly featureless plain on its way to where it had formerly entered the Thanatos Sea, ten kilometers behind me.

That river bed must still be here, somewhere, hidden by the water.

Taking a guess by following the line of what I could see of the river among the buildings to the north, I began moving towards what ought to be the river's old banks. Sixty meters to the west, the ground dropped sharply and I nearly stumbled. That was it! Taking another two steps brought the water nearly up to my 'Mech's neck. With only the head and parts of the shoulders showing above water, there was a good chance that those light 'Mechs—their attention fixed on targets ashore rather than out to sea—would miss me.

And miss me they did. The nearest *Stinger* passed within one hundred meters of my position before turning north, its Omicron 3000 laser held high and at the

ready. With infinite care I shifted my *Crusader* back up the hidden river bank, feeling for a firm foothold. Once the ancient bank gave way in a swirl of mud, but then one foot found solid ground and I was rising from the sea like some vast, metal horror released from the depths, brown water streaming in torrents from my armor, both arms extended to bring my lasers and long-ranged missiles to bear.

My first salvo burst among my unsuspecting targets like a tornado, churning geysers of steam and water skyward or striking home in flashes of light and fragmenting armor. The right rear torso of one of the *Stingers* disintegrated in whirling, smoldering chunks, leaving gaping wounds and exposing great loops of torn wiring and myomar sheathing.

The others turned, seeking their attacker. I fired again while they were still turning, dividing my fire between another *Stinger* and the *Panther*.

Laser fire struck the water close beside me, sending a column of steam boiling past my windshield. Another salvo of LRMs lanced out from my arms, and I saw multiple flashes snap and sparkle along the *Panther's* left torso and arm.

"Red Company, this is Red Beta Three!" I yelled, continuing to trigger fire into those temptingly close-grouped targets. Another hit! And another! "I'm six hundred meters south of you, engaging four light 'Mechs in the water."

A moment's stunned silence, and then

Captain Wiley replied. "Wha...MacCray? Where in hell did you come from?"

"Never mind that!" I replied. "See if you can redeploy to help me with these people!"

One *Stinger* was down, now, only its head and shoulder visible above the water, and smoke was boiling from a crater in its torso right at water level. The *Panther* and two surviving *Stingers* were spreading out now to give me a more difficult target, and their return fire was beginning to fall home. My *Crusader* rang like a gong as an SRM smashed it square in the center torso. The *Panther* brought its right arm up and triggered a round from its PPC. The charge caught me in the left shoulder, staggering me back a step as blue lightning arced against the sky. My instruments went wild under the momentary havoc of the electrical overload within the *Crusader's* electronics. If that had been fresh water, the charge build up could have fried me, but it dissipated in seconds, leaving my 'Mech wreathed in oily smoke.

I was firing my LRMs again, targeting on the *Panther*, watching missile after missile dissolving in light and fragments of armor. Then the enemy 'Mech's head blossomed open and a spindly trail of smoke arched into the sky. An instant later the *Panther's* torso opened in a gout of flame. The water churned white for fifty meters in every direction under a hail of debris, and when the smoke cleared the *Panther* lay in two half-submerged segments. The *Panther's* pilot had punched out just before his engine had blown.

That ended the first phase of the Battle of the Cerberus Complex. The surviving *Stingers* turned and ran as Adamski's *Wasp* and LeClerc's *Phoenix Hawk* from the Wolverine's Recon Lance waded in from the north. By the time we rejoined the rest of the company on dry land, the 'Mechs which had had the Wolverines pinned against the shore had withdrawn. Perhaps they had interpreted my arrival and the loss of two of their 'Mechs as the approach of substantial reinforcements. On such minor misinterpretations and misperceptions turn the fate of battles...and of empires.

When our relief forces arrived two days later, we were down to four functioning 'Mechs. Wiley's *Warhammer* could barely stand, and its left arm PPC was off at the shoulder.

But we held.

Since that day, I've often wondered about the hand of fate in combat. If I had not had to drop out of the line of fire of that attacking *Shilone*, I would have dropped close by my

unit, would have been able to stick close to Lieutenant Dunbar, as I'd been ordered to.

And I might well have died instead of her.

Had I not acted almost instinctively when I noticed that the water below looked "funny," I would have braced for a water landing and smashed both legs. I would have been helpless, doomed to capture or starvation, and my comrades ashore would have been surrounded and cut down, one by one.

And if I'd dropped dead on target into my DZ along with my unit, those enemy 'Mechs—they were all Fourth Proserpina Hussars, we later learned—would have had us surrounded and dead to rights. As I thought about it later, it occurred to me that the warrior who did the most to win the victory for us that day was that nameless Kurita *Shilone* pilot who had forced me to miss my DZ in the first place!

The Wolverines have another combat drop coming up soon—and by some black-humored twist of fate our target is Scheat V, yet again. Our invasion in 3026 it turned out, was short-lived, brought to a close by a Kurita thrust at Xhosa VII and the failure of our drive to block Homam and Proserpina. Now, just a year later, the raids and counter-raids have reached a fever pitch. Tensions are rising, and fleets are marshalling along the frontier in vast maneuvers designed to test and tempt the enemy. Wargames, they call them, but our orders from the Davion high command direct the Wolverines to test Kurita's resolve by raiding that bitter, desert-girded world of Scheat V once more. By the time this article sees print, the matter will have been resolved, one way or another.

But here, now, in the night watch of my barracks at Port Borea, the future yawns, and it is black and malevolent. I am waiting...waiting...and learning, once again, that it is the waiting which is hardest.

But tell me, is it empty chance which rules the battlefield, or some dark and bloody God of Battle? Before my first drop on Hell, I'd never given the matter much thought. But now I see our return as a challenge flung in the teeth of chance, a black and deliberate tempting of the Hand which governs a warrior's fate.

I dread the outcome.

I loathe the waiting.



PERSPECTIVE: A WARRIOR IN REVIEW

Captain Sinclair M. MacCray is currently unit commander of Company A, (The Wolverines), Second Battalion, Deneb Light Cavalry, in service with House Davion along the Davion-Kurita frontier.

He was born in 2999 at the Davion military garrison on Ridley IV. His father was Sergeant Randall MacCray of Company A's Fire Lance, his mother an astech attached to the unit's field repair company. A typical Mechbrat, MacCray grew up with the Wolverines. At age 10 he was formally inducted as an apprentice MechWarrior under the tutelage of the Wolverine's Weapons Master, Koru Yamashita. In 3017 he was temporarily reassigned to the Meistmorn Academy on Doneval II, where he served as a cadet under the redoubtable Major Sergei Vang.

By the time he was 20, he was participating in raids with the unit, piloting a *Stinger* in the Wolverines' Recon Lance, or serving with the company's mobile reserve and rear echelon security.

Randall MacCray was killed in 3021, during the Kurita raid on Dobson. His *Crusader*, fire-blackened, its head smashed open by autocannon fire, was recovered on the field where it had fallen, together with the wreckage of two Kurita *Vulcans*. The salvage crews reported that one of the *Vulcans* had been literally torn apart in 'Mech-to-'Mech combat. Young Sinclair MacCray inherited his father's *Crusader* and assumed the elder MacCray's number three position in the Wolverine's Fire Lance.

MacCray served with distinction with the Deneb Light Cavalry in numerous raids and defensive actions since 3021. His daring in close-unit actions won the notice of the regimental commander, and he was three times cited for meritorious conduct in unit dispatches. At Gallor III he attacked a damaged 80-ton *Charger* 'Mech-to-'Mech and destroyed it before it could destroy a Davion ammunition convoy. He was awarded the Federated Suns' Legion of the Phoenix, Second Class, for that action.

In 3026, after the action at the Cerberus Complex on Scheat V, he received a lieutenant's field commission and was placed in command of the Wolverines' Fire Lance. Less than a year later, the death of the Wolverines' commander, Captain John C. Wiley, resulted in the unit's reorganization. MacCray was promoted to captain and given command of the company. At the time this article went to press, MacCray had been officially credited with a total of 17 kills and over 30 assists.

The Wolverines are currently assigned to the Davion-Kurita border, where they have been participating in Galahad '27, the controversial series of maneuvers and wargames designed to test Davion military capabilities in the region.

FLC-4N FALCON

Overview:

In 2536, it became obvious to the military leaders of the old Star League that there would be a need in the future for a light 'Mech that could screen units from the probing and scouting of enemy recon lances largely composed of *Wasp*, *Stinger*, and *Locust* 'Mechs. What was needed was a 'Mech design that could chase them down and be more than a match for them in combat. Thus was born the "Bugkiller"—the FLC-4N Falcon.

The *Falcon* was used by most commanders to keep away the enemy scouts and, in so doing, keep their intentions secret for a longer period of time. Unfortunately, these 'Mechs were never produced in great numbers; at the present writing, barely 200 are known to be still operational.

Capabilities:

The *Falcon* uses its 30-ton mass to good advantage in the role for which it was designed. With a maximum speed of some 98.2 kph over open terrain, it can overtake both the *Wasp* and the *Stinger*, slowly but surely. The *Locust*'s speed advantage, however, proved too great; *Falcon* operational doctrine provides that the *Locust* is always the first engaged, in the hope that a lucky hit might slow it down. The *Falcon* also possess PRS-60 jump jet units, which allow it to "get the jump" on the *Locust* from time to time. Even with the *Falcon*'s heavy laser armament, heat buildup is rarely a problem with the installation of two additional heat sinks.

The *Falcon*'s main advantage over all other light 'Mechs is the amount of armor that she carries—fully twice as much armor as either the *Wasp* or *Stinger* has. Only the *UrbanMech* and the *Valkyrie* among light 'Mechs carry as much armor; of these, one specializes in city fighting, while the other is limited to production by House Davion. The armor on the *Falcon* allows it to fight reasonably well against two-to-one odds or better. And rarely will any *Wasp* or *Stinger*

pilot stay around for a drawn-out engagement with a *Falcon*.

The *Falcon* is armed with a Sunglow Type 1 Medium Laser along with two Omicron 1000 Light Lasers. All are arm mounted. A more unusual weapons placement is the two shoulder-mounted Reginald Mark VI machine guns facing the rear arc of the machine. This provides the capability for all round fire and is especially useful against bypassed infantry.

No major defects have come to light within the *Falcon* design as of this date. However, because of the small number of *Falcons* in the field, spare parts are becoming harder and harder to come by. Many battle-worn *Falcons* sport exotic "jury-rigs" that can and do impede their performance. Unless production is restarted on this design in the near future at some facility, the problem can only get worse.

Battle History:

During a raid on Korrior in early 3002, a defending lance of House Liao 'Mechs engaged the rearguard of the House Davion raiding force, now falling back to their DropShips. The Liao *Falcons* charged ahead at the retreating Davion lance, which unfortunately contained some *Valkyries*. The long-range missile fire by the Davion 'Mechs slowed the pursuing *Falcons* to such an extent that the raiding force was able to withdraw with little damage. The *Falcons* could not compete with the long-range fire of the *Valkyries*.

During an attack on Murcheson by bandit king raiders in 3010, the raiding force was cut off from its DropShip by reinforcing Kurita units. Running from the counterattack, the bandits tried to lose themselves in the hills and mountains of the area. The Kurita commander let loose his special *Falcon* tracking lance, which, after some ten days of pursuit, was able to run down five of the bandit light 'Mechs and force them to surrender or be destroyed. None of the four *Falcons* suffered major damage.

Variants:

Because of the dearth of spare parts, the variations on the *Falcon* increase everytime one has a major overhaul. Some of the more common variants include the elimination of the rear machine guns and the addition of another two tons of armor. Dropping the two light lasers in favor of increased jump capability has also been tried. This does cause some heat build-up problems however, and the greater jumping ability rarely proves essential. The most prevalent *Falcon* variant is now the hybrid. It is not unusual to see *Falcons* with the legs or arms of other 'Mechs. Most common are *Falcons* fitted with limbs from the "Ost" series of 'Mechs (*Ostscout*, *Ostsol*, *Ostroc*). These 'Mechs seem more adaptable to the *Falcon* structure.

Notable 'Mechs and MechWarriors

MechWarrior Marcus Bellisaurius

Bellisaurius is a noted *Falcon* pilot in the 12th Tau Ceti Rangers. He started his military career as an officer in an elite guards infantry regiment of House Liao. He earned his MechWarrior status by capturing his 'Mech during an attack against Hsien in late 3013. Armed with only a shoulder SRM unit, Bellisaurius sat on a crumbling edge of a 10-story building in the shattered city of Westmoreland, waiting for a target. When one walked past, he fired pointblank into the cockpit, killing the pilot. Now, his *Falcon* is fitted with a new head assembly from a disabled *Commando* 'Mech, and Bellisaurius is gaining quite a reputation as an unstoppable killing machine.

Lieutenant Jeremy "Bushwacker" McNee

Currently commanding the Tracking Lance of the 10th Sword of Light Regiment, "Bushwacker" McNee is renowned for never giving up a pursuit unless ordered to do so. In addition to his screening and scout-killing prowess, McNee has the instincts of a born hunter, tracking enemy 'Mechs through trackless ground, sniffing out ambushes before they can be sprung and setting his own traps with ease. Aboard his *Falcon* "Gutstomper II," McNee is a one-of-a-kind MechWarrior in the service of House Kurita—a Successor State that rarely rewards unique behavior.

by Dale L. Kemper

Mass: 30 tons
Chassis: Duralyte 296
Power Plant: GM 180
Cruising Speed: 65.6 kph
Maximum Speed: 98.2 kph
Jump Jets: PRS-60
Jump Capacity: 180 m
Armor: Star Guard Type II
Armament:

- 1 SunGlow Type 1 Medium Laser
- 2 Omicron 1000 Light Lasers
- 2 Reginald Mark VI Machine Guns

Manufacturer: Stormvanger Assemblies, Light Division

Communications System: Garret T20C

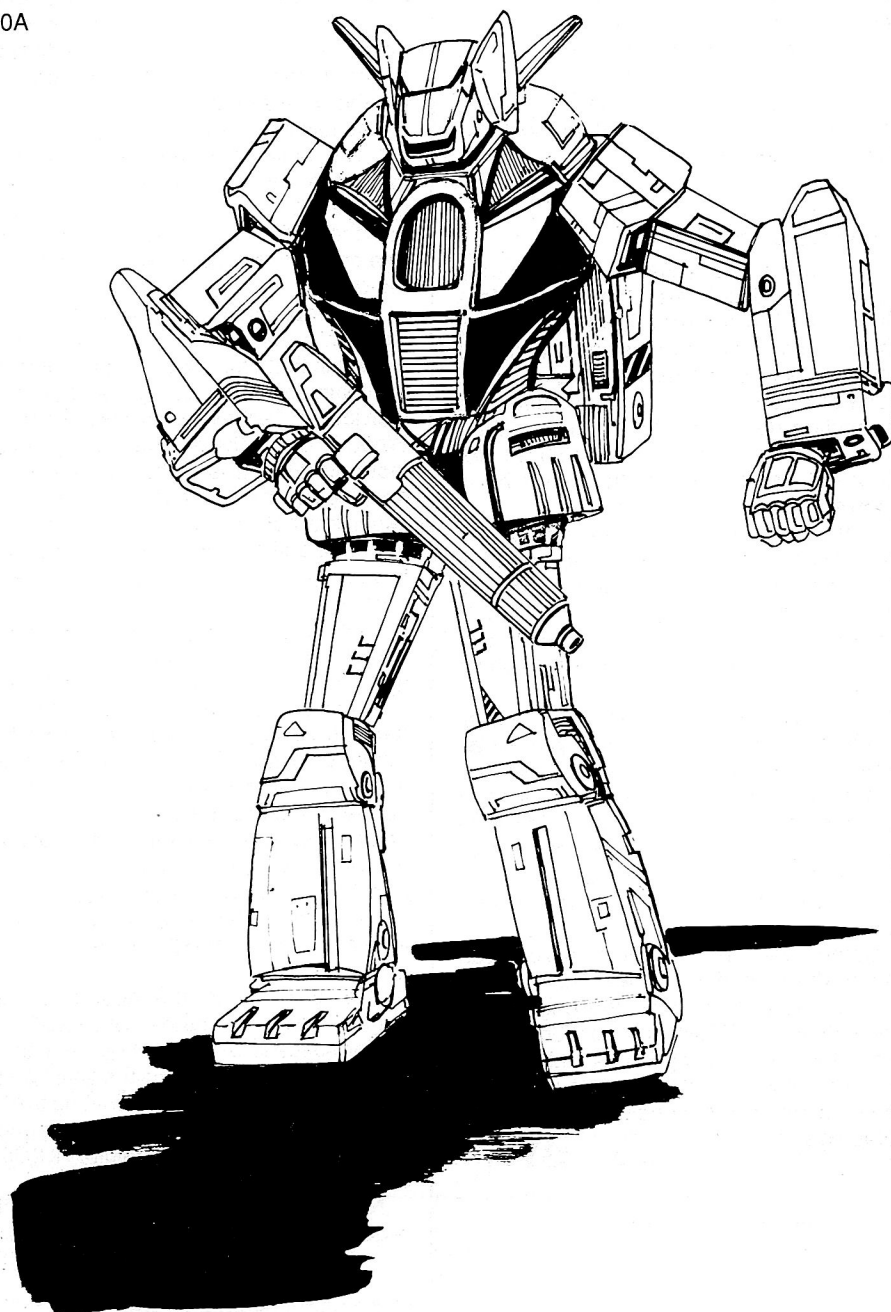
Targeting and Tracking System: Dynatec 150A

Type:	FLC-4N Falcon	<i>Tons</i>
Tonnage:	30 Tons	30
Internal Structure:		3
Engine:	GM 180	7
Walking MPs:	6	
Running MPs:	9	
Jumping MPs:	6	
Heat Sinks:	12	2
Gyro:		2
Cockpit:		3
Armor Factor:	96	6

	<i>Internal Structure</i>	<i>Armor Value</i>
Head	3	9
Center Torso:	10	14/3
Rt./Lt. Torso:	7	12/2
Rt./Lt. Arm:	5	8
Rt./Lt. Leg:	7	13

Weapons and Ammo:

<u>Type</u>	<u>Loc.</u>	<u>Critical</u>	
Medium Laser	RA	1	1
Light Laser	RA	1	.5
Light Laser	LA	1	.5
Machine Gun	RT (rear)	1	.5
Machine Gun	LT (rear)	1	.5
Ammo (MG) 200	CT	1	1
Jump Jets	RT	3	1.5
Jump Jets	LT	3	1.5



ENGINE SWAPS

MechWarriors today are as concerned about keeping their 'Mechs running as they are about winning battles. Indeed, most Warriors and Techs consider the struggle to keep their machines in operational condition one long, bloody battle in its own right.

This column, in this and future issues, will address the problems faced by MechWarriors and MechTechs in keeping their machines combat-ready.

ENGINE SWAPS

The engine of any BattleMech can truly be considered its heart. One of the potentially most hazardous critical hits to any 'Mech is a hit which pierces armor and core shielding and damages the engine itself. Such damage can result in increased heat production during combat, a critical shutdown, or even an explosion which will destroy the 'Mech and kill the pilot if he is unable to punch out in time.

In the field, engine hits are among the most difficult to repair. The Tech and his assistants must clear through superficial damage on the armor over the 'Mech's central torso and, depending on the type of 'Mech, access the engine block housing cover.

The engine access panel itself weighs as much as a ton. In the field, with repair platforms, derricks, or repair gantries unavailable, with other 'Mechs required at the front and unable to lend a (literally!) helping hand, often the only option is to maneuver the 'Mech onto the ground prone and rig a tripod hoist above the engine block section.

Sometimes, the best choice a Tech can make when faced with one or more critical engine hits is to replace the engine unit completely. The following section is provided for people using FASA's MechWarrior simulator. It is intended to supplement the rules given in the original MechWarrior rules book.

MECHWARRIOR: Optional Rules Variant 0101-A

While repairing damage on a BattleMech which has received one or more critical engine hits, the player may be able to speed things along by securing the intact engine of another BattleMech.

The following restrictions apply:

- * The replacement engine must be of the same type as the engine which is being replaced. Both the *Assassin* and the *Archer* use the VOX 280. Thus, the engine from one could be replaced by the engine from the other.

- * The replacement engine must be examined by a competent Warrior or Tech to ascertain that it is, in fact, undamaged. This is accomplished by rolling 2D6 against the individual's Technician Skill Roll Target +6. Whether or not the engine in question is in fact undamaged is up to the referee, depending on the situation. Generally, if the 'Mech has not taken any critical engine hits, the engine itself will be undamaged or will have relatively light damage which is easily repaired.

- * Replacing an engine requires all of the equipment necessary for repairing an engine: tool kit, joining kit, fusion kit, and a repair platform. If no repair platform is available, the 'Mech can be laid on its back (either on its own power or with assistance from another 'Mech), and a derrick or a handed 'Mech can be used to maneuver the engine into position. Construction of a derrick takes 60 minutes, assuming one Tech and five laborers. The rules given under Time Factor in MechWarrior can be used to increase or decrease this time.

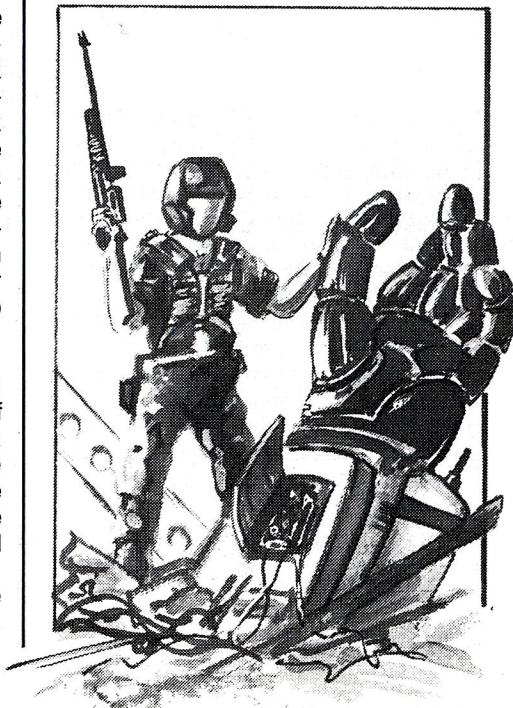
The basic time for the repair of a critical engine hit is 300 minutes, with a 2D6 roll of 7+ for success. A roll of 4—6 results in a partial success. Replacing the entire engine requires 200 minutes (not counting the time required to find and retrieve a 'Mech engine of the required size), and requires a 2D6 roll of 5+ for success.

Note that the 300-minute figure is the time required to repair one critical engine hit.

Successfully replacing the entire engine would repair all engine critical hits at the same time. Failure in the 2D6 roll indicates that the engine has been replaced, but unforeseen problems make start-up impossible. A second 200 minutes and a second 5+ roll are required to complete the repairs.

USING 'MECHS FOR REPAIRS

Any experienced Tech worth his thorium is well aware of the one absolute, basic shortcut trick of battlefield repairs: 'Mechs can do double duty as derricks! Even handless 'Mechs such as *Locusts* or *Warhammers* can be used to provide power for jury-rigged block and tackle hoists. With a block and tackle arrangement, they can lift three times their own mass, allowing even very large disabled 'Mechs to be repositioned for repairs. 'Mechs with hands are capable of extraordinarily delicate operations—the entire engine block free of a destroyed 'Mech and gently set it in place in the 'Mech being repaired. As a general rule of thumb, one such 'Mech can lift and carry up to one tenth of its own weight—carried free, rather than dragged behind as is the usual case with battlefield salvage. Two handed 'Mechs working together could lift and transport up to one tenth of the weight of the two 'Mechs combined. Thus, a 55-ton *Wolverine* could pick up and transport any engine up to and including a 5.5 ton Nissan 155. Note, however, that the 'Mech performing the operation must possess two handed arms, and the internal structure of both arms must be intact.



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BATTLETECH SIMULATOR

FASA, an Earth-based publisher of combat simulations, has produced a wide variety of battle simulators designed to sharpen MechWarriors' tactics and combat skills, including BattleTech, MechWarrior, CityTech, AeroTech, and BattleForce. BattleTechnology Magazine will include a special section called BATTLETECH SIMULATOR in each issue. This section will allow the readers to take various situations, encounters, and battles discussed in that issue's columns and feature articles and recreate them as combat scenarios.

These scenarios—referred to as game modules—are presented in the same format as the modules in such popular FASA publications as *Tales of the Black Widow Company* and *Gray Death Legion*.

Also included, from time to time, will be new rules, or rules variants, to various FASA simulations, including BattleTech, MechWarrior, and the Mercenary's Handbook. These will be coded with the issue number (the first issue is 0101, the second 0102, and so on throughout the year), plus a letter which will identify that rule or variant in future magazine issues. In this issue, 0101-A (see: Repair Bay) is a rules variant for replacing BattleMech engines in combat which can be used with MechWarrior or BattleTech, while 0101-B (see: following pages) modifies the original character generation rules for MechWarrior.

In all cases, these new rules or variants are strictly optional, and game referees should keep in mind that some of these rules could upset the balance of play in BattleTech campaigns or other FASA games.

OPTIONAL RULES VARIANT 0101-B:

MECHWARRIOR: TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

by J. Andrew Keith

MechWarrior is FASA's role-playing simulation of man-to-man level actions and interactions in today's Successor States. It is highly recommended as a training aid to all Warriors who wish to test their skills in a wide variety of situations both on and off the battlefield.

The optional rules suggested below are intended to expand the utility of the MechWarrior character generation system. Among other things, they take into account some of the concepts mentioned in the feature article on MechWarrior training (MechWarrior: Mind and Machine, beginning on page 26 of this issue). They also cover the generation of characters with greater experience and training than was allowed for in the original system right at the start of play, which allows easier introduction of more skilled, higher-ranking characters and NPCs into the simulation process.

The rules outlined here will modify the original character generation section of the MECHWARRIOR rules. They should be considered strictly optional, and can be used (either in whole or in part) as the Gamemaster permits.

TRAINING

Instead of receiving a basic budget of 150 CPs for each character, have the starting CP amounts generated somewhat at random. Roll 2D6-2 (for a number between 0 and 10, with 5 as the average); this is the **Training Level (TRN)** for the character being created. Each character starts with 125 CPs plus a bonus of 10 x TRN CPs. Average characters now receive 175 points for the purchase of attributes, skill, inborn abilities, and initial possessions. Actual amounts will run anywhere from 125 to 225 CPs, and give more variety to individual characters being created.

Characters purchase attributes and inborn abilities first, using the normal MECHWARRIOR procedures. Next, choose which of five Character Types to be created: MechWarrior, Tech, Aerospace Pilot, Scout, or Soldier (which takes in infantry, armored, and atmospheric aircraft troops). Continue the purchase process by paying the cost for any special benefits the character may wish to acquire ('Mechs, Vehicles, Connections, Fighters, etc.), again using the basic rules and/or the summary of such benefits included later in this section. The balance of available CPs can be used to acquire skills.

Initial Training: All characters receive initial training in basic skills appropriate to their chosen career. These are shown on the Character Training Chart under the heading of *Initial Training*. The skill levels acquired in this step are free (0 CPs). Once initial training has been determined, the character may move on to one of five different categories of Advanced Training. Each has different characteristics and different basic entrance requirements.

Standard Military Training: *The character has received the equivalent of Basic Training as a member of some House or Planetary military service.* This option is available to any character and is awarded as a default when a character cannot qualify for any of the other options. Standard military training allows the purchase of any MECHWARRIOR skill according to the standard costs outlined in the basic rules. No higher areas of training may be drawn from if Standard Training is the first (or default) package entered.

Apprenticeship Training: *The character has been apprenticed to some existing formation or family unit.* This is available to any character who can roll 2D6 less than or equal to his TRN score. Skills are purchased as above, but costs may be modified according to the exact TRN level held.

See the Character Training Chart for details. No higher levels of training may be drawn from if Apprenticeship Training is the first package entered.

Martial Arts Training: *The character has studied under a Master of one of the various Martial Arts in vogue among the Warriors of the Successor States.* Techs may not take this type of training; for other character classes, a LRN score of 9+, and BODY and DEX scores of 8+ each are required, together with a successful 2D6 roll less than or equal to the TRN score. If accepted into Martial Arts training, the character may pay 50 CPs and receive a package of skill and attribute increases listed on the Character Training Chart. Though very economical in terms of cost, most of these skills will prove comparatively unnecessary to the ordinary flow of MECHWARRIOR campaigns, being mostly concerned with physical training. Characters who purchase this package may attempt to enter any other form of training (if they qualify for it and can afford it), either higher or lower on the list. They may NOT try to enter a second Martial Arts training program.

Academy Training: *The character has trained at one of the many military academies scattered throughout Human Space.* Scouts are not permitted to purchase this package, but any other character class can. Both LRN and TRN scores must be 6+, and a 2D6 roll less than or equal to TRN must be achieved. If accepted into an Academy, pay a price of 75 CP to receive the skill increases listed on the chart. Characters may also attempt to enter any other form of training they desire, provided they hold the right qualifications and have sufficient CPs to afford the costs involved. They may NOT enter another Academy training program, though they could attempt the NAIS package.

NAIS Training: *The character has been selected for training at the New Avalon Institute of Science.* This package is only available to characters from Davion or Steiner space, and Scouts are not permitted. Eligible characters must have LRN and TRN scores at 8+, and need to throw 2D6 for an 11+ to enter (reduce the target score by 1 for each attribute — including TRN — at 9+). If accepted into the NAIS, the character can pay 100 CP to receive all of the skill increases shown on the chart.

EXPERIENCE

Upon completing the Training process (or after creating a character according to the

basic MECHWARRIOR rules, if Training is not being used), roll 4D6-4 for the character's Experience (EXP); the result is a number between 0 and 20. Each level of EXP represents about a year of active combat duty or further training in the field.

Multiply the EXP score by 100 to determine the CPs awarded to the character as a result of his or her post-training experience. Skills, attributes, connections, or titles are all available as per the basic game rules on Character Improvement (NOT Character Creation!). The character can also have unused CPs converted into XP; multiply the number of CPs to be converted by 10 to get this figure. The EXP score also places the character into one of the basic Experience Classes described in MECHWARRIOR, rather than having him automatically start off Green. The Character Experience Chart shows the relationship of classes to levels of EXP, plus the number of skill and attribute increases awarded IN ADDITION to all purchases when a character begins in a given class. REG characters receive the awards shown for their class only; VET characters receive the REG awards *and then* the VET awards listed.

Characters purchasing skill levels with EXP must have at least Level 1 in a number of skill categories equal to their LRN score. These purchases must be made before any points are spent to raise previously held skills to a higher level.

AGE

A character's starting age depends upon his training and experience. Training lengths (and the effect training has on age) will vary according to the training packages chosen.

Training	Duration
Initial:	+0 years
Standard Military:	15 + (TRN/2) years
Apprenticeship:	8 + (TRN x 2) years
Martial Arts:	+3 years
Academy:	+4 years
NAIS:	+6 years

Round fractions up; +# indicates that the figure is added to other appropriate age calculations. The minimum age for a character at the end of the training period is 16 years old; raise any lower figure to 16 before going on. After all training has been worked out, add the EXP score to the age already established for the character's age at the time the character actually enters play.

GENERAL NOTES

When introducing these optional rules, keep the following points in mind.

Points received in character creation are not automatically based on 150 CP. Use the TRN score to set starting CPs.

The MECHWARRIOR Academy and University skill packages are not used with these rules. Use the package presented here instead.

Do not permit the transfer of character points between characters.

Packages of skills purchased under this new system do not limit further skill purchases (except by taking up large numbers of points). Higher increases in skill levels are allowed even after a skill package has been bought.

The character may begin play with accumulated XP if he has received Experience and has not used it all on skill increases or other benefits.

The GM may feel free to introduce Training without allowing Experience, or Experience without Training, if he so desires. These options are designed to make the system more flexible, but they can be ignored if they don't increase the value of the simulation.



CLASS ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS

<u>MechWarrior</u>	<u>Soldier</u>	<u>Tech</u>	<u>Scout</u>	Aerospace <u>Pilot</u>
DEX=5+ LRN=5+	BODY=5+ DEX=5+	DEX=4+ LRN=7+	LRN=5+ CHA=6+	DEX=6+ LRN=6+

Character Training Chart INITIAL TRAINING (Open to All Characters)

<u>MechWarrior</u>	<u>Soldier</u>	Aerospace <u>Pilot</u>
Gunnery/Mech-1 Piloting/Mech-1	Brawling-1 Rifle-1	Gunnery/Aerospace-1 Piloting/Aerospace-1
<u>Tech</u>	<u>Scout</u>	
Technician-1 and either Mechanical-1 OR Engineering-1	Rogue-1 and either Diplomacy-1 OR Streetwise-1	

STANDARD MILITARY TRAINING (Open to All Characters)

All character classes spend CPs at normal MECHWARRIOR rates for any skills listed in the rules.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING (Roll less than/equal to Training Score)

All character classes spend CPs at the rates shown below (according to the character TRN score) for any skills listed in the rules.

TRAINING SCORE	CP COSTS
0-3	Normal
4-6	x .9
7-8	x .75
9-10	x .5

MARTIAL ARTS TRAINING (Tech Character Class Not Allowed) (Requires LRN 9+, BODY 8+, DEX 8+) (Roll less than/equal to TRN score)

If accepted, the character may pay 50 CP and receive the following skill and attribute increases:

<u>MechWarrior</u>	<u>Soldier</u>	<u>Scout</u>	Aerospace <u>Pilot</u>
Piloting/Mech+1 Acrobatics+2 Running+1 Brawling+2 Hide in Cover+2 Stealth+2 Survival+1 Bow/Blade+1 BODY + 1 DEX + 1	Acrobatics+1 Running+2 Brawling+2 Hide in Cover+2 Stealth+2 Survival+2 Bow/Blade+2 BODY + 1 DEX + 1	Acrobatics+2 Running+1 Brawling+2 Hide in Cover+2 Stealth+3 Survival+1 Bow/Blade+1 BODY + 1 DEX + 1	Piloting/Aerospace+1 Running+1 Acrobatics+2 Hide in Cover+2 Brawling+1 Stealth+1 Survival+2 Bow/Blade+1 BODY + 1 DEX + 1

ACADEMY TRAINING
(Scout Character Class Not Allowed)
(LRN 6+; TRN 6+)
(Roll less than/equal to TRN Score)

If accepted, the character may spend 75 CP to purchase the following skill increases:

<u>MechWarrior</u>	<u>Soldier</u>	<u>Tech</u>	<u>Aerospace</u>
Piloting/Mech+1	Rifle+1	Technician+2	Pilot
Gunnery/Mech+1	Gunnery/Artillery+1	Engineering+1	Piloting/Aerospace+1
Technician+2	Driver+2	Mechanical+1	Gunnery/Aerospace+1
Pistol+1	Pistol+1	Computer+2	Engineering+2
Leadership+1	Leadership+1	Driver+1	Pistol+1
Survival+1	Survival+1	Piloting/Mech+1	Leadership+1
			Survival+1

NAIS TRAINING
(Davion or Steiner Allegiance)
(Scout Character Class Not Allowed)
(LRN 8+; TRN 8+)
(Roll 11+; reduce target by 1
for each Attribute—including TRN—at 9+)

If accepted, pay 100 CP to purchase the following skill increases:

<u>MechWarrior</u>	<u>Soldier</u>	<u>Tech</u>	<u>Aerospace</u>
Piloting/Mech+2	Leadership+2	Technician+3	Pilot
Gunnery/Mech+2	Tactics+2	Engineering+2	Piloting/Aerospace+2
Leadership+2	Stealth+2	Mechanical+2	Gunnery/Aerospace+2
Tactics+2	Gunnery/Artillery+2	Computer+2	Jumpship Pilot/Nav+1
Driver+1	Driver+1	Piloting/Mech+1	Engineering+2
Rifle+1	Rifle+1	Driver+2	Computer+2
Diplomacy+2	Diplomacy+2	Leadership+1	Mechanical+1
Pistol+2	Pistol+2	Medical/1stAid+2	Tactics+2
			Leadership+2

EXPERIENCE CHART

<u>Level</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Attributes</u>	<u>Skill Levels</u>
0-3	GRN	—	—
4-15	REG	1/+1	2/+1 each
16+	VET	1/+1	2/+1 each

AVAILABLE MATERIAL BENEFITS

Scouts		Soldiers		Technicians	
<u>Die Roll</u>	<u>"Tonnage"</u>	<u>Die Roll</u>	<u>"Tonnage"</u>	<u>Die Roll</u>	<u>"Tonnage"</u>
-4	5	-4	10	-4	4
-3	5	-3	10	-3	4
-2	10	-2	15	-2	6
-1	5	-1	10	-1	4
0	15	0	20	0	8
1	10	1	15	1	6
2	15	2	20	2	8
3	5	3	10	3	4
4	20	4	25	4	10
5	10	5	15	5	6
6	20	6	25	6	10
7	25	7	30	7	12
8	15	8	20	8	8
9	20	9	25	9	10
10	30	10	35	10	14
11	25	11	30	11	12
12	35	12	40	12	16
13	30	13	35	13	14
14	35	14	40	14	16
15	40	15	45	15	18
16	45	16	50	16	20
17	35	17	40	17	16
18	40	18	45	18	18
19	45	19	50	19	20
20	50	20	65	20	35

The material benefits gained from these tables are rolled up as given in the basic rules for 'Mech and AeroSpace Fighter assignments. Before rolling on the table, choose a modifier anywhere between -6 and +9 (zero is allowed). Plus modifiers cost 20 CP per point added, minus modifiers grant a bonus of 15 CP per point subtracted. Roll 2D6, apply the modifier, and read the Tonnage result on the appropriate table.

You may choose any Vehicle (not 'Mechs or AeroSpace Fighters) of the Tonnage shown. Alternatively, take the CP result times 500 for the number of C-Bills the character receives to start: ALL C-Bills earned this way must be spent on personal equipment prior to starting. Note that you can choose to take a smaller vehicle than the tonnage given and the balance in extra gear; this option should also be allowed for MechWarriors and AeroSpace Pilots as well.

BATTLE OF KILGOUR: BattleForce Campaign

SIMULATOR CAMPAIGN

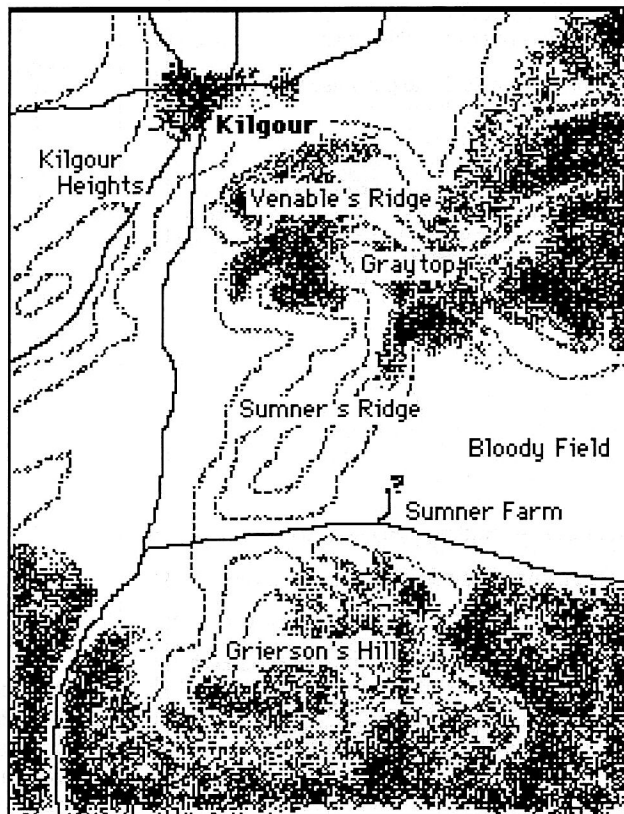
This month's *BattleTac* column describes the Battle of Kilgour, in the Corellan system along the Davion-Liao border. MechWarriors desiring to sharpen their strategic and tactical skills may wish to use this engagement to generate training simulator combat modules.

Those with access to FASA's new campaign simulator *BattleForce* may wish to use the information presented below for the 2nd Kearny Highlanders and the Scotian Highlanders to recreate the entire second day's battle at Kilgour. Several specific tactical incidents in that battle are then presented as standard *BattleTech* combat modules. These various modules may be set up independently of one another, or they can be combined into a grand tactical and strategic recreation of the battle.

Battle of Kilgour: BattleForce Campaign TIMING THE PROPER MOMENT

Timing is all-important in the successful handling of a full-scale battle. At Kilgour, the Scotian Highlander plan required that one section of the defending force hold superior numbers at bay until the attackers had been drawn into a vulnerable position. If the Scotian commander waited too long, however, his center would be broken, his army divided, and his force defeated piecemeal. If he struck too soon, the surprise effect of having fresh 'Mechs strike the enemy rear and flanks would be minimized by the fact that the enemy still had large numbers of fresh 'Mechs in reserve.

This scenario allows opposing players to judge the proper timing of Kilgour's second day for themselves. The special rules outlined below are designed to balance play, allowing for the fact that, in the *real* battle, neither commander knew what the other commander was up to or how large his forces were.



SPECIAL RULES

Both commanders are operating under certain handicaps which determine the nature of this battle. The Scotian commander must carefully judge the best time to unleash his hidden reserves. The Kearny commander suspects a trap set by his opponent and must withhold sufficient forces to counter any unexpected attack by the enemy's reserves.

Training simulations of the Battle of Kilgour should use the following restrictions:

Scotian Commander:

At the beginning of the simulation, those units designated as "hidden units" have their positions secretly noted by the Scotian player. They are not placed on the board, and their locations are not revealed to the Kearny player. These hidden units are stationary and well-camouflaged in the woods north and south of the main battlefield. They may not move, and they may not engage in combat unless activated by an enemy unit.

Once a unit is activated, it is placed on the map at its designated location. It may then move and fight normally.

At any given point during the battle, the Scotian commander may choose to activate his reserves. At this time, all hidden units are placed on the board in their designated hexes. They may then move and fire normally.

Scotian Tactics:

The Scotian Commander can pursue any of several possible courses of action:

- * He may wait as long as he dares in hope that the Kearny Commander will release some or all of his reserves against the center, trusting that his reserve forces will be large enough to trap the entire enemy force.

- * He may choose to hold his line on Sumner's Ridge, hoping to inflict sufficient casualties on the enemy that the Kearny forces will be forced to retreat (see: Victory Conditions, below).

- * He may activate his hidden units and use them as mobile reserves, threatening or attacking the enemy reserves or targets of opportunity (such as small numbers of Kearny 'Mechs moving up to the battlefield from the rear). If the battle has moved east of Sumner's Ridge and the enemy reserves are still at Kilgour Heights, this mobile reserve could interpose itself along Sumner's Ridge in order to interdict Kearny reinforcements.

Kearny Commander:

At the beginning of the action, the Kearny commander places his 3rd Battalion forward and holds his 2nd Battalion in reserve.

At any time, the Kearny Commander may release all or part of his reserves to join the battle. What he cannot do is blindly probe the woods on the Scotian Highlanders' flanks. Before entering the heavy woods to the north or south of the Scotian center, the Kearny forces must use infantry or light scout forces (such as the Scout Platoon of Norris's Rangers) to discover the enemy positions.

Each time a Kearny scout unit enters a hex adjacent to a heavily forested hex, the Scotian player secretly rolls 1D6. On a roll of 1, he must activate all units in any adjacent hexes. On a 2 - 4, he must activate any *one* unit in any adjacent hex. On a 5 - 6 (or if, in fact, he has no forces in that hex), he says nothing. The Scotian player always has the option of deliberately activating any of his units at any time, at which point they are placed on the board.

Activated units may engage in combat with the scouting forces, or they may move to an adjacent hex and "vanish." Their new position is recorded by the Scotian player, and they are deactivated. Units remain activated so long as they are engaged in movement or combat or as long as enemy scouts are in an adjacent hex.

Once the Kearny commander has exposed the positions of at least three different Scotian BattleMechs, he may, if he desires, attack the position normally. Scotian 'Mechs will remain hidden until a Kearny 'Mech enters an adjacent hex or until the Scotian player chooses to reveal them by moving or attacking.

Kearny Tactics:

The Kearny commander *knows* there are Scotian forces in the woods. He does not know how strong those forces are or precisely where they are located, and to charge in headlong with valuable 'Mechs is irresponsibly foolhardy. He must choose between several courses of action:

- * He may hold his reserves in order to guard against a Scotian counterattack.

- * He may scout the approaches to the Scotian flanks, then attack to engage the hidden Scotian reserves.

- * He may ignore the flanks and concentrate on the Scotian center, hoping to break the enemy line before the Scotians can muster their reserves.

GAME SET-UP

The map on the opposite page represents the terrain south of the town of Kilgour, on Corella II. MechWarriors who do not have access to fully programmable holographic simulators may recreate the terrain of the battle by transferring the map below onto a blank hexgrid sheet, or they may use the map sheets provided in BattleForce, with the important terrain features (woods, ridges, hills) marked lightly in pencil or indicated using counters, transparent overlays, or cut-out sections of blank hex grid paper.

The Table of Organization for both the 2nd Kearny Highlanders and the Scotian Highlanders are provided on the following pages. Players should use BattleForce counters or make counters of their own. The initial set-up is determined by the players, within the following framework:

2nd Kearny Highlanders:

Both the 2nd and 3rd Battalions begin the battle on or west of Kilgour Heights.

Scotian Highlanders:

1st Battalion: On or behind Sumner's Ridge

2nd Battalion: Hidden in the woods on or southeast of Grierson's Hill

3rd Battalion: Hidden in the woods on or east of Venable's Ridge

All hidden units *must* be positioned within dense woods hexes.

During the night of July 5th, Colonel Graham redeployed approximately half of the strength of both his 2nd and 3rd Battalions to the center of his line.

The players should feel free to introduce their own variations to this initial deployment. In particular, the Scotian Highlander commander may wish to redeploy more or fewer of his forces, to adjust the balance of 'Mechs held in reserve.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

Players use the standard BattleForce victory conditions.

In addition, the Kearny commander must attempt to conserve his forces on planet. The total tonnage of the Kearny BattleMechs exceeds 3600 tons. Once the Kearny forces have lost BattleMechs totaling 2000 tons (over half their force, or an average of 8 to 12 'Mech lances), then further Kearny operations on the planet will be compromised, and the Kearny forces must retreat off the north or west side of the map area.

Such a retreat is considered to be a decisive victory for the Scotian Highlanders, whatever their own losses.

Once the Scotian Highlanders have lost BattleMechs totaling over 2000 tons, then the Davion forces on the planet are considered to be broken and will be of little further use in the campaign. If the Kearny Highlanders can inflict such casualties on their opponents without taking similar losses themselves, then the Kearny Highlanders are considered to have won a decisive victory. However, the Scotians will win even if they lose over 1000 tons worth of 'Mechs, provided they inflict similar losses on the enemy.

This fact may be an additional motive for the Kearny commander to hold half of his forces in reserve and to attempt to break the Scotian line with a single Battalion...

Just as it almost happened in the actual battle.



TABLES OF ORGANIZATION, BATTLE OF KILGOUR

The 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 2nd Kearny Highlanders began the second day's battle deployed west of the line of ridges south of Kilgour, along a gentle rise known locally as Kilgour Heights. As shown on the simulator maps, the 2nd Battalion was held in reserve on Kilgour Heights until too late to be of any use in the battle. MechWarriors engaged in their own simulations of the battle of Kilgour may deploy the Kearny forces along Kilgour Heights as they choose.

The Kearny T.O. appeared as follows:

TABLE OF ORGANIZATION

2nd KEARNY HIGHLANDERS

2nd Battalion

Battalion Headquarters—11(16)/9-3 5 Vet

Major Martell Longheart; Elite *Atlas*
Brian Stewart; Veteran *Vindicator*
Jean McPherson; Veteran *Phoenix Hawk*
Morton Johnston; Veteran *Commando*

Kernighan's Company

Command Lance—11(13)/8-3 4 Elite

Captain Robert Kernighan; Elite *Stalker*
Charles Douglas; Elite *Vindicator*
Ian Telford; Elite *Vindicator*
Pamela Kernighan; Veteran *Commando*

Fire Lance—9(12)/8-3 5 Regular

Lieutenant Stuart McDonald; Veteran *Archer*
McCauley Peterson; Regular *Shadow Hawk*
Quentin McFarland; Regular *Vindicator*
Charles Gunn; Green *Commando*

Recon Lance—8(10)/5-2 6 Regular

Lt. Angus MacLeod; Veteran *Warhammer*
Morton Kernighan; Regular *Commando*
Ruben Skeat; Regular *Stinger*
Patrick Mifune; Green *Locust*

Braxton's Company

Command Lance—11(13)/8-3 5 Veteran

Captain Fergus Braxton; Elite *Crusader*
Ian Fraser; Veteran *Rifleman*
Charles MacKinnon; Regular *Vindicator*
Everard McKenzie; Regular *Spider*

Fire Lance—9(13)/7-3 5 Regular

Lieutenant Ramsay Stuart; Veteran *Rifleman*
Gregory Kirk; Regular *Vindicator*
Angus Braxton; Regular *Phoenix Hawk*
Marcus Ullman; Green *Commando*

Recon Lance—4(7)/6-2 7 Green

Lt. Gordon McNair; Veteran *Shadow Hawk*
Douglas MacLeod; Green *Spider*
Erland Talcott; Green *Wasp*
Kathleen McNair; Green *Locust*

Minoku's Company

Assault Lance—12(16)/8-2 4 Veteran

Captain Ohiro Minoku; Veteran *Charger*
Kathleen Stewart; Veteran *Marauder*
Dennis MacGregor; Veteran *Warhammer*
Gregory Freeman; Regular *Vindicator*

Attack Lance—9(13)/8-3 5 Regular

Lieutenant Marcia Horowitz; Veteran *Archer*
Jahled Hammadi; Regular *Shadow Hawk*
Douglas McClintock; Regular *Phoenix Hawk*
Andrew O'Hara; Regular *Commando*

Recon Lance—5(8)/6-2 7 Green

Lt. Toshiro Redfield; Veteran *Phoenix Hawk*
Siegfried Kirchner; Green *Spider*
David Ross; Green *Wasp*
Stewart MacCleod; Green *Locust*

3rd Battalion

Battalion Headquarters—13(16)/8-3 5 Vet

Major James D. Cochraine; Elite *Stalker*
Angus McDonnell; Veteran *Warhammer*
Jeremy Nourse; Veteran *Wolverine*
Gordon Cochraine; Veteran *Commando*

McFarlane's Company

Command Lance—7(13)/8-3 5 Elite

Captain Stewart McFarlane; Elite *Grasshopper*
Heinrich Nicholson; Elite *Hatchetman*
Ramsay MacLeod; Elite *Blackjack*
Manuel Gonzalez; Veteran *Ostscout*

Fire Lance—7(10)/8-3 6 Regular

Lt. Robert MacDougall; Veteran *Shadow Hawk*
Megan McFarlane; Regular *Vindicator*
Adam Gomez; Regular *Phoenix Hawk*
N'Gama M'botu; Green *Cicada*

Recon Lance—6(10)/6-2 7 Regular

Lt. Kathleen McDonnell; Veteran *Phoenix Hawk*
Arthur Kent; Regular *Spider*
Kirk MacNab; Regular *Commando*
Francois DuPlessis; Green *Wasp*

MacDougall's Company

Assault Lance—12(15)/9-3 4 Veteran

Captain Angus MacDougall; Elite *Marauder*
Niki Carter; Veteran *Archer*
Marshall Corrigan; Regular *Rifleman*
Ramsay James; Regular *Shadow Hawk*

Medium Lance—9(12)/8-3 5 Regular

Lieutenant James Corrigan; Veteran *Crusader*
Ian MacDougall; Regular *Shadow Hawk*
Pamela Edwards; Regular *Vindicator*
Giles Howard; Green *Spider*

Recon Lance—4(7)/6-2 7 Green

Lieutenant Morgan Li; Veteran *Shadow Hawk*
Michael Gunn; Green *Spider*
Kathleen MacDougall; Green *Wasp*
Douglas Cromartie; Green *Locust*

Prata's Company

Command Lance—11(15)/9-3 4 Regular

Captain Richard Prata; Veteran *Thunderbolt*
David Kingsley; Regular *Catapult*
Cameron MacCorrie; Regular *Rifleman*
Ivan Toruchev; Regular *Shadow Hawk*

Fire Lance—9(12)/8-3 5 Green

Lieutenant Cecil Wyndham; Regular *Ostroc*
Yashar Eisenstein; Green *Vindicator*
James MacRae; Green *Vindicator*
Kathleen Fraser; Green *Commando*

Recon Lance—5(8)/6-2 7 Green

Lieutenant Sharon Gray; Veteran *Phoenix Hawk*
Tristan McFarland; Green *Spider*
Charles McDonald; Green *Stinger*
Stewart Kirk; Green *Locust*

At Kilgour, the Kearny Highlanders had numerous non-'Mech armored units attached to the 2nd and 3rd Battalions as scout or recon groups. It was one of these units (the Scout Platoon of Norris's Rangers) which made contact with hidden 'Mechs of Graham's right flank force. According to the best reports, these forces were held in reserve with the Kearny 2nd Battalion or deployed towards the enemy flanks in attempts to determine the Scotian Highlander's positions. MechWarriors using this information to set up training

simulations of Kilgour may deploy these light forces as desired.

Norris's Rangers

Command Platoon-8(7)/10-3 4t Green

Captain Charles Norris; Regular Rommel
James Kellogg; Green Patton
Karl Doenitz; Green Rommel
Jameth Black; Regular Patton

Fire Platoon-10(8)/7-3 4t Green

Lieutenant Ivar Tomlinson; Regular Manticore
Jeremy Wolf; Regular Manticore
Shari Cramiston; Green Manticore
Strepan Josslic; Green Manticore

Scout Platoon-5(5)/4-1 8h Regular

Lieutenant Kannic Franklin; Regular Pegasus
Brad Hadley; Regular Pegasus
Andrew MacDonald; Regular Skimmer
Morgan Bearclaw; Regular Skimmer

Unattached Scout Platoon-5(5)/4-1 8h Vet

Lieutenant Scot Kendall; Elite Pegasus
Americ Penric; Veteran Pegasus
Arturo Gonzales; Veteran Skimmer
Charles Smith; Regular Skimmer

Unattached Fire Platoon- 10(8)/7-3 4t Reg

Lieutenant Raymond Grissman; Veteran Manticore
Zelas Newton; Regular Manticore
Ian Fairfax; Regular Manticore
Kalis Burton; Regular Manticore

Unattached Light Platoon-4(3)/4-2 4t Regular

Lieutenant Jordan Helmuth; Veteran Galleon
Charles Grenville; Regular Galleon
Michelle Rochmont; Regular Galleon
Robert Durant; Regular Galleon

The Scotian Highlanders began the second day's action deployed along the line of hills and ridges south of Kilgour. Though a full three battalions are listed, the unit had entered the campaign understrengthened and had already suffered considerable losses during the initial Liao invasion and during the first day's fight for the town. Graham placed the 1st Battalion in the center along Sumner's Ridge, as shown in the simulator maps of the action. The 2nd Battalion was hidden in the woods covering Greirson's Hill to the south, while the 3rd Battalion was positioned in the woods along Venable's Ridge and Graytop to the north. In both cases, approximately half of the flank battalions' strength was then drawn to the center to reinforce the 1st Battalion.

According to the best available information at this time, the Scotian combat T.O. appeared as follows:

TABLE OF ORGANIZATION

SCOTIAN HIGHLANDERS

1st Battalion

Battalion Headquarters— 12(14)/7-2 3 Elite

Colonel Ramsay Graham; Elite *Stalker*
Gregory McPherson; Elite *Marauder*
Ross McDonnell; Elite *Rifleman*

Company A—Randall's Raiders

Command Lance—8(14)/8-2 5 Elite

Captain Stuart Randall; Elite *Victor*
Lieutenant Kara Stewart; Elite *Shadow Hawk*
Douglas Graham; Elite *Phoenix Hawk*
Larry Murdock; Veteran *Vulcan*

Fire Lance—5(8)/6-3 4 Veteran

Lieutenant Ryan Kelly; Elite *Shadow Hawk*
Randal McPherson; Veteran *Enforcer*
Ross Cromartie; Veteran *Valkyrie*

Recon Lance—4(6)/5-2 6 Veteran

Lieutenant Ian Douglas; Veteran *Panther*
Jean Fife; Veteran *Stinger*
Douglas Keith; Veteran *Wasp*
Kazuko Matsumi; Veteran *Locust*

Company B—Macarron's 'Mechs

Command Lance—9(13)/8-3 6 Elite

Captain Ian Macarron; Elite *Archer*
Lieutenant Andrew MacRae; Elite *Dragon*
Philip Thatcher; Elite *Phoenix Hawk*
Charles Gordon; Veteran *Spider*

Fire Lance—6(10)/7-3 5 Veteran

Lieutenant Angus Hawkins; Elite *Shadow Hawk*
Robert Keith; Veteran *Enforcer*
Donald Fife; Veteran *Valkyrie*
Megan Radcliff; Veteran *Commando*

Recon Lance—5(6)/4-2 5 Regular

Lieutenant Brian Graham; Veteran *Whitworth*
Russell Morton; Regular *Spider*
Ian McFarland; Regular *Locust*

Company C—The Black Douglas

Command Lance—14(17)/8-3 -4 Veteran

Captain Keith Douglas; Elite *Warhammer*
Lieutenant Heather Fife; Veteran *Archer*
Ramsay Douglas; Veteran *Rifleman*
Kirk McIlvain; Regular *Rifleman*

Fire Lance—5(9)/6-2 8 Regular

Lt. Angus Macarron; Veteran *Phoenix Hawk*
Robert MacRae; Regular *Cicada*
Stuart MacLeod; Regular *Ostscout*
Toshiro Kogo; Regular *Spider*

Recon Lance—4(7)/5-2 7 Green

Lieutenant Gregory McKenzie; Veteran *Panther*
Douglas Fairfax; Green *Spider*
Charles Keith; Green *Wasp*
Roberta Douglas; Green *Locust*

2nd Battalion

Fraser's Company

Command Lance—6(10)/5-2 4 Elite

Major Laurie Carlisle; Elite *Charger*
Captain Kendric Fraser; Elite *Rifleman*
Eric Stewart; Veteran *Assassin*

Fire Lance—7(12)/8-3 6 Regular

Lieutenant Ian Keith; Veteran *Shadow Hawk*
Agnes McFarlane; Regular *Enforcer*
Gregory Fife; Regular *Phoenix Hawk*
Robbie McNair; Green *Cicada*

Recon Lance—3(5)/3-1 Regular

Lieutenant Dan Raeburn; Veteran *Cicada*
Grayson Campbell; Regular *Spider*
Beth Ann Gregor; Regular *Locust*

McFarland's Company

Command Lance—11(15)/9-3 5 Veteran

Captain Angus McFarland; Elite *Archer*
Rodney Smith; Veteran *Rifleman*
Charlie Cromartie; Veteran *Shadow Hawk*
Lee Stuart; Veteran *Phoenix Hawk*

Fire Lance—6(10)/7-2 4 Regular

Lieutenant Jeanette Ramsay; Veteran *Wolverine*
Victor Vlad; Regular *Enforcer*
Milton Coroleone; Regular *Phoenix Hawk*

Recon Lance—3(6)/4-2 6 Green

Lieutenant Stuart McLean; Regular *Cicada*
Lewis McDonnell; Green *Ostscout*
William Sutherland; Green *Spider*

3rd Battalion

Keith's Company

Command Lance—7(11)/6-2 4 Veteran

Major Kirk Livingston; Elite *Victor*
Captain Heather Keith; Veteran *Dragon*
Brian McPherson; Veteran *Scorpion*

Fire Lance—4(7)/5-2 5 Veteran

Lt. Gregor MacRae; Veteran *Phoenix Hawk*
Louise Cawson; Veteran *Assassin*
Milo Sorenson; Veteran *Ostscout*

Recon Lance—4(7)/5-2 8 Green

Lieutenant James Fraser; Veteran *Cicada*
Rhett Stewart; Green *Ostscout*
Russel Greene; Green *Spider*
Jess Mason; Green *Locust*

McKenzie's Company

Command Lance—8(10)/5-2 4 Regular

Captain Sam McKenzie; Veteran *Warhammer*
Lieutenant Russell Douglas; Regular *Quickdraw*
Douglas Ridley; Regular *Locust*

Fire Lance—4(7)/6-2 5 Green

Lieutenant Keith Fraser; Regular *Wolverine*
Jame Fairfax; Green *Shadow Hawk*
Doran Alberts; Green *Locust*

Recon Lance—2(4)/3-4 4 Regular

Lieutenant Bradley Carlisle; Regular *Assassin*
Henry McDonald; Regular *Spider*

At the Battle of Kilgour, the following armored units were attached to the Scotian Highlanders. Though normally fielded with specific companies, they were held in reserve on the Scotian Highlander's northern flank, against the possibility of a Kearny infantry attack or flanking move. The Scotian commander may field these units as he pleases in combat simulations.

Oppie's Raiders

Command Platoon 10(9)/10-3 4t Green

Captain Hap Oppenheimer; Regular Patton
Ardan Griffith; Green VonLuckner
Valery Biggs; Green Patton
Vince Marcuso; Green Patton

Fire Platoon 9(8)/9-2 4t Regular

Lieutenant Douglas Innes; Regular Rommel
Valery Chernenkov; Regular Rommel
Jarvis Haggsworthy; Regular Rommel
Roger Hammer; Regular Rommel

Light Platoon 4(3)/5-2 4t

Lieutenant Grath Davias; Regular Galleon
Hatsuko Grady; Green Galleon
Silas Smith; Regular Scorpion
Paula Fraser; Regular Vedette

Unattached Scout Platoon - 4(3)/4-2 4t Vet

Lieutenant Jason King; Elite Galleon
Ahmed Khaled; Veteran Galleon
Stanley Osserman; Veteran Galleon
Robert Langley; Veteran Galleon

Unattached Scout Platoon - 5(5)/4-1 8h Reg

Lieutenant Jamie Kendall; Regular Pegasus
Hans Leider; Regular Pegasus
Josef Waldheim; Regular Skimmer
Bradley Simmons; Regular Skimmer

Randall's Charge at Bloody Field

THE BATTLE OF KILGOUR

The battle had been seesawing back and forth across that one damned plot of ground all morning. "Bloody Field," we called it, and the name stuck. The place was littered with the smoking ruins of burned out 'Mechs and with arms and legs and nameless bits of junk, as well as the far grimmer debris of War.

Flesh and steel can take only so much. The Liao enemy was pressing us hard...too hard. Our forces were falling back, unable to hold what felt like unlimited numbers.

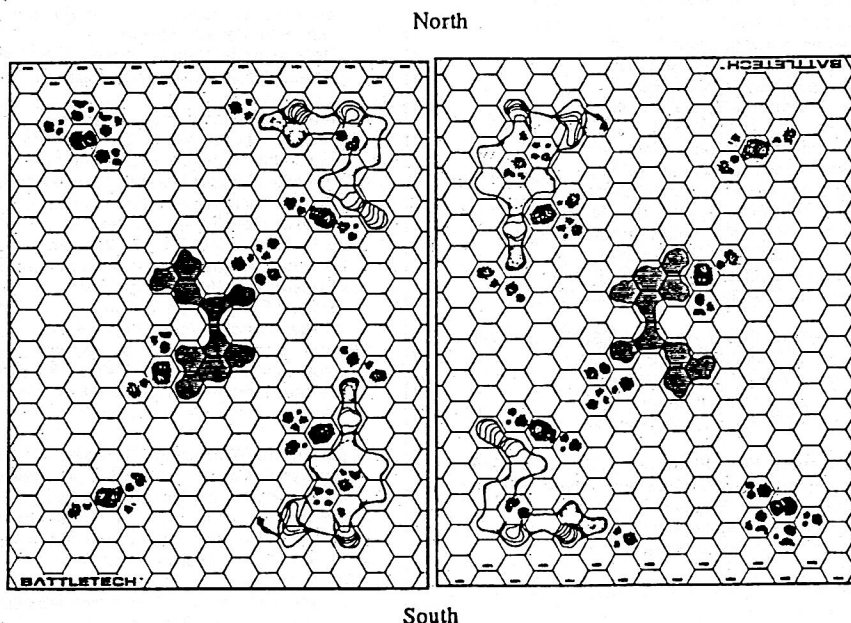
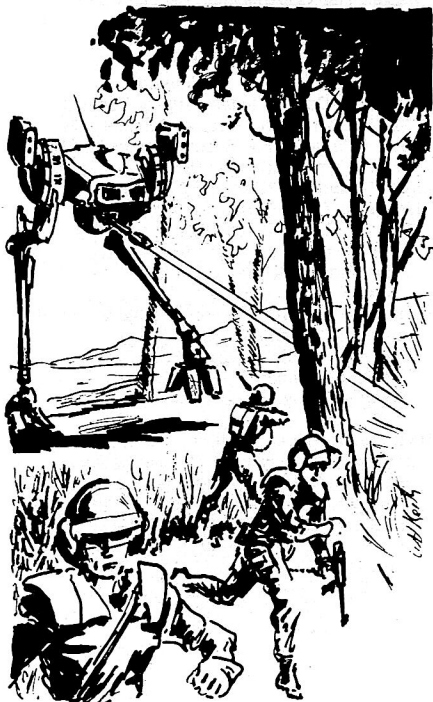
The Captain had pulled us back for a breather, and that's when we realized our forces were starting to drift to the rear. "We've lost," Murdock said, and for once, I was ready to agree with him.

"No!" The Captain's voice snapped across our tacom lines like autocannon fire, and then that I saw his *Victor* out in front of our company formation—what was left of it—facing the enemy lines all alone. "No, goddammit! The enemy is that way! Form up, and move!"

Did I say that flesh and steel can only take so much? Perhaps I was mistaken. We were certain—dead certain—that there was nothing more in us left to give.

But we urged our battered machines forward, into the teeth of hell.

Excerpted from *I was There:
Stories of Warriors and Their War*
Edited by William H. Keith, Jr.
Exeter Press, Exeter



GAME SET-UP

Lay out the two BattleTech mapsheets as shown, or use a blank hexsheet. All terrain on the map area is considered to be flat, open ground.

Defender

The Defending forces consist of elements of Prata's Company and McFarlane's Company, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Kearny Highlanders:

Prata's Company Command Lance

Captain Richard Prata; Veteran *Thunderbolt*
David Kingsley; Regular *Catapult*
Left torso medium laser gone
Cameron MacCorrie; Regular *Rifleman*

Fire Lance

James MacRae; Green *Vindicator*
Kathleen Fraser; Green *Commando*

Recon Lance

Lieutenant Sharon Gray; Veteran *Phoenix Hawk*
Charles McDonald; Green *Stinger*
Missing left arm, 1 point of armor left on right front torso
Stewart Kirk; Green *Locust*
2 points armor left in right leg

McFarlane's Fire Lance

Lt. Robert MacDougall; Veteran *Shadow Hawk*
Megan McFarlane; Regular *Vindicator*
Adam Gomez; Regular *Phoenix Hawk*
5 points of armor in front center torso, 6 points of armor in left arm
N'Gama M'botu; Green *Cicada*
Left arm and left arm Medium Laser gone

In addition to the damage listed above, the defending player should take 50 additional points of armor damage and distribute them among his forces. This distribution should not be revealed to the attacker.

Attacker

The attackers are the remnants of Company A, Randall's Raiders, 1st Battalion, Scotian Highlanders.

Command Lance

Douglas Graham; Elite *Phoenix Hawk*
Larry Murdock; Veteran *Vulcan*

Fire Lance

Lieutenant Ryan Kelly; Elite *Shadow Hawk*

Recon Lance

Lieutenant Ian Douglas; Veteran *Panther*
Jean Fife; Veteran *Stinger*
Douglas Keith; Veteran *Wasp*

The attacking player should take 30 points of armor damage and divide them among the 'Mechs of his force. The distribution of this damage should not be revealed to the defender.

Victory Conditions

Randall's Raiders win a decisive victory if all Kearny forces are destroyed, and a major victory if the Kearny 'Mechs are forced to retreat off the map. Any other result is a major defeat.

The Kearny forces win a decisive victory if they can destroy all of the Scotian Highlander 'Mechs. It is possible (see: Special Rules, below) that orders will arrive directing the Kearny unit to withdraw. Once this order is received, the Kearny player's goal is not the destruction of enemy 'Mechs, but the withdrawal of as many of his surviving 'Mechs off the west end of the board as possible.

If all Kearny 'Mechs on the board at the time the order is received make it off the map, the Kearny player wins a major victory. If he loses one or two additional 'Mechs during the retreat, he wins a minor victory. If he loses three or more additional 'Mechs, he suffers a major defeat. If he loses all of his remaining 'Mechs (whatever the number), he suffers a major defeat.

Note that it is possible for both sides to claim a major victory at the same time.

Special Rules: Surprise

Randall's Raiders had one overwhelming advantage in their attack: surprise. The commander of the Kearny company could not believe that the ragged formation approaching his own was, in fact, a Scotian Highlander attack.

To represent the element of surprise on a smoke-thick and confused battlefield, the Kearny 'Mechs may not fire until the turn *following* the turn on which the Scotian 'Mechs open fire, or the turn *following* the turn in which at least one Scotian BattleMech comes to within 5 hexes of any Kearny 'Mech.

In addition, each time one of the Kearny 'Mechs is destroyed or disabled (unable to move or fire due to shutdown or other damage), the Kearny player must roll 2D6. On a roll of 9 or higher, orders from his headquarters direct him to withdraw from the field, keeping as much of his unit intact as possible. From that point on, the Kearny side may continue to engage in combat, but his goal changes. To win a victory, he must now successfully withdraw as many of his surviving 'Mechs off the west edge of the map as possible.

Second Day

During the height of the Battle of Kilgour, elements of the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Kearny Highlanders, managed to secure a breakthrough of the Scotian Highlanders' lines. This breakthrough was of limited extent, and the Kearny field commander was not, at first, aware that any breakthrough had been made. The exhaustion of his own forces, as well as the heavy smoke which obscured much of the battlefield, slowed his reaction times and led to a fatal delay.

At the same time, Colonel Graham of the Scotian Highlanders, while he was not certain how bad the breach in his own lines was, did know that a breach had been made. If the enemy was able to exploit the hole it had made in his line, now stretched so thin as to be nearly nonexistent, the Scotian forces would be completely divided, with a powerful enemy force squarely between the two halves.

Graham needed time to reorganize his own collapsing center. Reinforcements were available but in the wrong part of the field, and it was still too early to deploy them against the Kearny rear and flanks.

Working quickly, he assembled the only strike team available, survivors of the company known as Randall's Raiders. Already severely handled, Randall's Raiders were on the point of complete disintegration.

But it was sacrifice the Raiders, or lose the battle.

Graham himself gave the orders to the exhausted Captain Randall: "Sweep the field!"



HOLDING THE LINE

COUNTING THE MINUTES

We had our orders: "Hold at all costs!" What do you do in the face of orders like that?

If you're a warrior, trained to fight, to obey orders, to die, if need be for cause and comrades—then you hold.

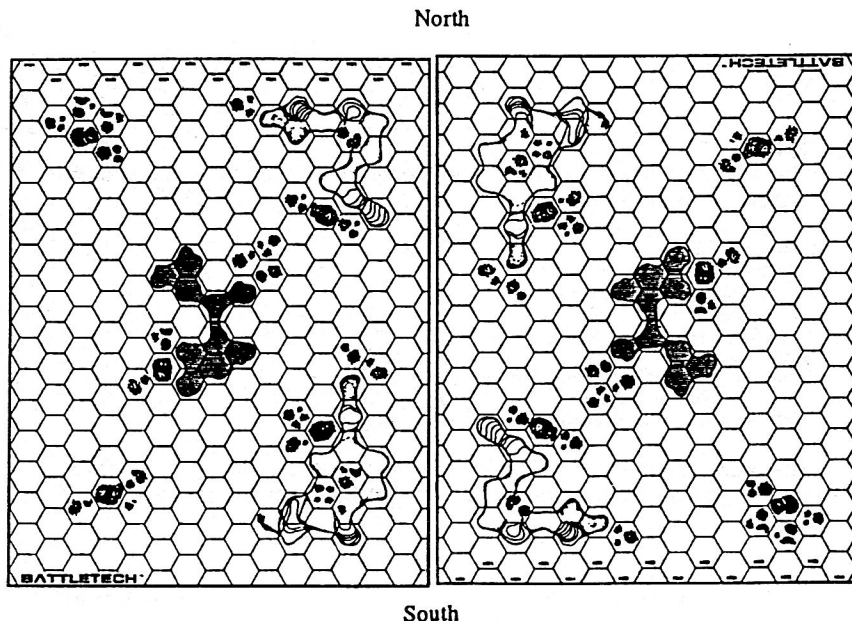
Or die trying.

By mid afternoon, we had MechWarriors dropping out because their 'Mechs were shutting down from heat overload, because the warriors themselves simply could not press their minds or bodies further in the numbing horror of 'Mech-to-'Mech combat. Colonel Graham had given the order at last: two red rockets in the north gave the signal. Our reserves were on the way!

But how long would it take our reinforcements to get to the front? Reinforcements or not, we could still lose the battle if our center gave way, even at the last possible moment.

We *had* to hold, somehow...

from *Thin Red Line of Heroes*
by Donald Fife
New Avalon Press
3028



GAME SET-UP

Lay out the BattleTech map sheets as shown, or use a sheet of blank hex grid paper. All terrain on the battlefield is considered to be open, level ground, and special terrain features on the printed maps are ignored.

Defender

The defender is what is left of Macarron's 'Mechs, holding the center of the Davion line. His forces include the following:

Command Lance

Captain Ian Macarron; Elite *Archer* - Archer
Philip Thatcher; Elite *Phoenix Hawk* - PH

Fire Lance

Robert Keith; Veteran *Enforcer* - Green GRIFTH
Donald Fife; Veteran *Valkyrie* - MG1
Megan Radcliff; Veteran *Commando* - SPICARD

Recon Lance

Lt. Brian Graham; Veteran *Whitworth* - GRIFFIN

The defending player should distribute 40 points of armor damage among his 'Mechs. The distribution should not be revealed to the attacking player.

Attacker

The attacking forces include elements of MacFarlane's Company, plus the 3rd Battalion Headquarters Lance:

Battalion Headquarters

Major James D. Cochraine; Elite *Stalker*
20 points of damage, distributed randomly
Jeremy Nourse; Veteran *Wolverine*
Gordon Cochraine; Veteran *Commando*



McFarlane's Company

Command Lance—7(13)/8-3 5 Elite

Capt. Stewart McFarlane; Elite *Grasshopper*

Ramsay MacLeod; Elite *Blackjack*

Recon Lance—6(10)/6-2 7 Regular

Lt. Kathleen McDonnell; Vet *Phoenix Hawk*

Arthur Kent; Regular *Spider*

Francois DuPlessis; Green *Wasp*

In addition to the damage listed for Cochraine's 'Mech, an additional 60 points of armor damage are distributed among the other 'Mechs in the Kearny force. The distribution should not be revealed to the Scotian player.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The Kearny player wins a major victory if he can break the Scotian line and exit the east side of the map with at least four 'Mechs still able to move and fire. He wins a decisive victory if he can eliminate all of the Scotian 'Mechs and preserve four 'Mechs to exit the east side of the map.

The Scotian player wins a major victory if he can prevent this.

The Kearny player faces a time limit. He must achieve his goal and reach the east edge of the board with at least four 'Mechs before Game Turn 12. On Turn 12, word arrives that major Scotian forces have been sighted in the rear. If no breakthrough has been achieved, the order will be given for Kearny forces still engaged with the enemy to withdraw.

Should the order for Kearny forces to withdraw be given, the Kearny commander's victory goals change. He must now exit the west edge of the map with as many 'Mechs as possible. The Scotian commander may allow him to pass or he may attempt to inflict additional damage on the retreating enemy. If the Kearny player loses three additional 'Mechs after the order to retreat is given, the Scotian player wins a decisive victory. The Kearny player can still win a major victory at this point by completely eliminating the Scotian force.

Both players will have to balance the odds and chances to determine how much farther they want to press their men and machines.

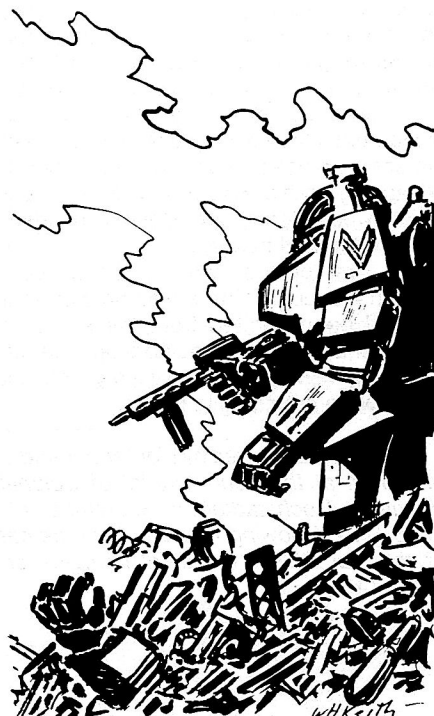
Battle of Kilgour

Graham's battered mercenary command had reached the limits of its endurance. Though he'd hoped to draw a far larger portion of the enemy forces into his carefully-laid trap, Graham realized that he would have to commit his reserves *now*, or lose the battle. In one sense, at least, his opponent had won, simply by outlasting him with superior forces.

Graham himself gave the signal, firing two red flare rockets from his battle-scarred *Stalker*. Upon seeing that signal, reinforcements hidden in the woods to north and south would fall on the Kearny Highlanders' rear, trapping them, perhaps breaking their attack.

Even as he did so, he realized his center was caving in under continued pressure all along the front. B Company of his 1st battalion, Macarron's 'Mechs, held the line, but they had suffered fierce losses and were already wavering and falling back. If the line failed before his reinforcements could arrive on the field, the battle would be lost, fresh forces or not.

Had Graham waited too long?



DEEP TROUBLE

Encounter on Scheat V

There was a golden opportunity for us here. Ten 'Mechs of a space-launched Davion company had landed right in our laps. For an hour, the four lances which had been lying in wait for them at the old Tai Ch'ien factory complex had caught the enemy in a grueling cross-fire, and now the survivors had been backed into a narrow circle at the edge of the flooded Lin Pao Plains.

They were trapped, and the outcome had never been in any doubt. Three Davion 'Mechs had been destroyed or disabled in short order moments after they'd grounded, and now the survivors could neither retreat nor advance in the face of our strongly-held positions. They could retreat into the water, of course, but it was quickly obvious that the Davion warriors were unable or unwilling to retreat—possibly because they expected to meet reinforcements at that point later on.

Well, Colonel Hochstadter was determined to deny the enemy even the chance of retreat. "We have them now!" he exulted. "We will close the lid on their cage and crush them!"

My recon lance was the lid to the trap. Our orders were to head south across the flooded plain, then turn west and travel as rapidly as possible parallel to the coastline, about six hundred to a thousand meters out. At that range, it was expected that battle smoke and the covering fire laid down by our comrades ashore would mask our movement. Once we were directly south of the enemy's position, we would turn north, advancing on his rear in a surprise attack which would leave the Davion invaders surrounded and helpless.

The first part of the maneuver went smoothly enough. There was no sign that we had been spotted from the shore. It wasn't until we had turned north and begun to close with the enemy that we realized that things were not going to plan...

Testimony delivered by Lieutenant Andre Manurhin at the court martial of Colonel Vidmer R. Hochstadter on September 11, 3026 (TC), following Hochstadter's defeat at the Tai Ch'ien industrial complex on Scheat V.

GAME SET-UP

Deep Trouble can be played using two BattleTech game maps laid side by side. North, South, East, and West edges of the combat area are determined. One of the map sections is designated as the East Map Area, the other as the West.

A blank hex map (such as the reverse side of the AeroTech game map) can be used instead of the basic BattleTech maps. In this case, the West Map Area is considered to be west of the center line of the game map, 27 hexes from the eastern edge.

The terrain in this simulation is flat and covered by water to a depth of five meters. All terrain features printed on the map sheet are ignored.

In this simulation, Sergeant MacCray in his lone *Crusader* is the Attacker. Four light Kurita 'Mechs are the Defenders.

Attacker

Sergeant Sinclair MacCray's *Crusader*

Skills:

Piloting: 4

Gunnery: 3

(The *Crusader* is in perfect condition.)

Deployment

The attacker secretly selects the hex in which his 'Mech will appear, and records it. This hex may be anywhere on the West Map Area within 20 hexes of the west edge of the map. If the players are using an unnumbered hex sheet, the hex should be identified in some mutually acceptable way, i.e. "fifteen hex rows from the west edge of the map sheet, twelve hexes from the south edge." This hex represents one section of the submerged bank of a flooded river which runs north and south. The exact location of the river bank may be determined during the course of the battle by using die rolls detailed in the Special Rules section for this scenario.

The attacker does not place his 'Mech on the board (thereby revealing his position) until the moment of his choosing.

Defender

Lieutenant Andre Manurhin's *Panther*

Piloting: 4

Gunnery: 3

The *Panther* has already taken battle damage. It has 10 armor points remaining on its front center torso and 5 armor points remaining on its left arm.

Stinger #1

Piloting: 4

Gunnery: 3

This *Stinger* is in perfect condition.

Stinger #2

Piloting: 3

Gunnery: 3

This *Stinger* has already taken battle damage. It has 2 points of armor remaining on its right arm and 1 point of armor remaining on its right torso.

Stinger #3

Piloting: 3

Gunnery: 2

This *Stinger* is in perfect condition.

Deployment

On turn 1, the Defender enters the combat area anywhere on the east edge of the map within a corridor which extends between 5 and 15 hexes from the north edge. The defending 'Mechs may assume any desired formation. Their goal is to travel west across the map within this corridor (at least 5 and no more than 15 hexes below the north edge of the map) until they reach the western half of the map. If the players are using the blank hex sheet provided with AeroTech for this simulation, the Defender must travel at least 26 hexes from the east edge of the map.

Once the defending 'Mechs have reached the middle of the combat area (i.e., they have crossed onto the west half of the map) they may turn north, with the goal of moving off the north edge of the West Map Area.

These deployment restrictions represent the Defender's operational orders. The lance has been directed to enter the water at a point to the east of the combat area, travel west to a point which will position them south of a small group of trapped enemy BattleMechs, then turn north to attack the enemy from the rear.

As soon as the Attacker in this scenario makes his presence known, all restrictions are lifted, and the Defender may move freely and at his own discretion.

Special Rules

Deep Trouble is an unusual combat situation in that the entire battle takes place with the combatant 'Mechs waist deep or deeper in water. All hexes (with the exception of the river, see below) are considered to be Depth 1. All movement in these hexes requires 2 MP.

Water along the banks of the river is at Depth 2. Movement through a river bank hex requires 4 MPs.

'Mechs may walk (not run!) along the river bottom (Depth 3) at the rate of one hex per turn.

In addition, the following rules and restrictions apply:

Jump Jets: The Defender's 'Mechs are equipped with JumpJets. However, the exhaust venturis on all four 'Mechs are submerged. Each time the Defender attempts to use his JumpJets, he should roll 2D6. On a roll of 7 or less, he may execute the jump as planned. On an 8 or 9, his JumpJets will misfire, forcing him to abort his jump. On a roll of 10+, his jet nozzles will be so fouled with mud and weeds that there will be danger of explosion. He must immediately roll 2D6 and subtract his Pilot Skill. On a modified roll of 6 or more, the 'Mech's JumpJets explode, causing 2D6 x 3 points of damage to the 'Mech. Divide the damage points evenly between the left rear, right rear, and center rear torso. If the roll to avoid an explosion is successful (modified roll of 5 or less) the pilot successfully throttles down his jets and avoids an explosion. The jump, however, is still aborted.

The Submerged River: The position of the submerged banks of the Styx River is only approximately known by both sides. The river bank is lower than surrounding terrain and is considered to be at Depth 2, or about chin-deep on a 'Mech. The river bottom itself is now quite deep and is considered to be Depth 3—deep enough to submerge a 'Mech completely. At the start of the scenario, the Attacker is hiding in a river bank hex and has not yet been sighted by the enemy.

The Attacker chooses one hex of the river's east bank when he determines the position at which his BattleMech will appear during the battle. This hex is

LOCATION: One kilometer south of Tai Ch'ien, Scheat V

In an effort to confuse Davion raiders and DropShip pilots, large areas of coastland along the shores of Scheat V's southern seas had been flooded. This created some confusion within the battalion slated to spearhead the Davion invasion of the planet, but in most cases the attacking forces correctly identified their targets or were able to accurately determine their positions within an hour or two of landing.

At the Tai Ch'ien factory center on the River Styx, known to the Davion forces as the Cerberus Complex, one Davion company had the bad fortune of landing directly alongside its proper target—occupied at the time by elements from two companies of the Kurita Fourth Proserpina Hussars. The fight was savage but brief. The invaders were pinned down, unable to advance or retreat in the face of overwhelmingly superior firepower.

The Hussar's regimental commander was on hand and was determined to eradicate the Davion unit which had so propitiously fallen into his lap. By sealing off the enemy's single path out of the trap, he would ensure their surrender—or their complete destruction.

What Colonel Hochstadter had not counted on was the presence of a single Davion *Crusader* which had landed outside his trap. That lone 'Mech, separated from the others in its drop pattern by an aerospace fighter attack during the descent, had landed on the flood plain several kilometers to the south, well outside the combat area. As that *Crusader* waded north through waist-deep water to rejoin its companions, its pilot spotted the four-'Mech lid to Hochstadter's trap and recognized it for what it was.

What followed was a classic engagement pitting one heavy against four light 'Mechs.

The water, and the presence of an unseen river bed, added to the combatants' problems.



used to determine the location of the other river bank hexes.

The north-south hex row chosen by the Attacker is the eastern bank of the river. All of these hexes are at a depth of 2.

The Attacker informs the Defender when his 'Mechs enter depth 2 water. Obviously, this information will give the Defender some idea of where the Attacker is hiding. However, the Defender has a specific mission to accomplish, and a specific course to follow in order to accomplish that mission. Any diversion from that course in order to locate the Attacker's hidden 'Mech before the Attacker chooses to reveal himself is not permitted.

The hexes west of the river bank are river bottom and are considered to be at depth 3. The river bottom is 5 hexes wide at all points. Thus, the west bank of the river will always be 6 hexes west of the east river bank. The west bank is at Depth 2. All hexes west of the west bank are Depth 1.

If a referee is running the scenario, a more realistic simulation of the terrain may be employed. The referee prepares a map which charts the location of the river, with the secret hex chosen by the Attacker positioned along the eastern bank. In this case, the river can wind back and forth, rather than having it laid out in a straight line. The referee then informs both sides when their 'Mechs enter a river bank hex.

Combat

Beginning Combat: Combat begins at any time of the Attacker's choosing. The Attacker may move from Depth 2 water to Depth 1 water, then fire once without receiving simultaneous return fire from the Defender. Once the Attacker's first attack has been delivered and resolved, subsequent combat proceeds normally, with all movement and fire being considered simultaneous.

Crusader Leg-Mounted Weaponry:

The *Crusader* mounts a pair of Harpoon-6 SRM racks on its legs which, at Depth 1, lie just about at water level. During any given turn in which the Attacker wants to fire SRMs, he must roll 1D6. If the result is even, the SRM tubes are above the water's surface and may be fired normally. If the result is odd, the SRMs are below the water's surface and may not be fired.

The players do not need to keep track of individual hexes from which SRMs are fired, since the depth changes involved are very slight. Even if the *Crusader* remains stationary from one turn to the next, rolling 1D6 may allow the *Crusader* to fire its SRMs one turn, but not on the next. Each roll determines the ability of both *Crusader* SRM racks to fire.

All of the Defender's weapons may be fired at any time from water of Depth 1 or less.

No weapons may be fired by 'Mechs at depths of 2 or greater.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The defender in this scenario is attempting to surround an enemy 'Mech force several hundred meters to the north of this encounter area. He wins a major victory if he can exit all four 'Mechs off the north edge of the western portion of the map. He wins a minor victory if he can exit three 'Mechs off the north edge of the western portion of the map.

Since the success of the Defender's maneuver depends on his ability to engage in combat with 'Mechs to the north, all Defender 'Mechs must retain all of their weapons (excepting machine guns) for them to be counted for victory conditions. Thus, for example, a *Stinger* which has lost its right arm cannot be counted towards the Defender's victory conditions, since the loss of its right arm results in the loss of its medium laser.

In addition, if the Defender can exit three or four 'Mechs off the north edge of the west map portion and destroy his opponent's *Crusader*, he wins a decisive victory.

The Attacker wins a major victory if he can prevent the Defender from winning a major victory. He wins a decisive victory if he can prevent the Defender from moving more than two fully-armed 'Mechs off the north edge of the west portion of the map. He wins a spectacular victory if he can completely destroy (not simply disarm) any three of the enemy 'Mechs.

All other results (the *Crusader* is destroyed, but three or more of the Defender's 'Mechs have lost weapons in the battle, for example) are considered to be a draw.

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More Than Warriors

Life is cheap, but BattleMechs are not.

And yet, in a culture torn by war and blind destruction, there is something—the human quality—which sets Man apart from the machines. Any inspection of the warfare which kills men would be incomplete without careful examination of that which makes Man what he is.

This column, in this and future issues of BattleTechnology, will present glimpses into that humanity, the spirit and soul of those who are warriors...but who are also men and women.

They are more than warriors. They are Human.

Throughout the history of Mankind, Warriors have created their own art: writing, songs, poetry, paintings, means of communicating with others that which they could not share in any other way.

Music—whether epic ballad or camp ditty—has long been one way in which a warrior could express his feelings about those things which mattered to him: fear, honor, duty, bravery, victory, grief, loneliness, comradeship, boredom, anger, humor...the list is as long as any list of human emotion.

In the feature article—MechWarrior: Mind and Machine—which discussed aspects of modern MechWarrior training, mention was made of the practice of apprenticing young Warriors-to-be to an experienced Warrior, one who could literally remold the raw material of raw recruits into the image of...a Warrior. There has always been need for such an individual, from the Centurions of Rome to the Marine D.I.s of the 20th Century to the Weapons Masters of today's Mercenary BattleMech companies.

The following song—one of numerous extant versions—has no original author or version; it is simply one of those camp songs which arose within the fellowship of men who had served as apprentices under a particular training master. Only a few of the many extant verses—those suitable for a family publication—are recorded here. Its object, Major Sergei Vang, also known as "Death's Head" because of his hairless, battle-scarred appearance, is Senior Weapons Master at the Meistmorn Academy on Doneval II. Hundreds of MechWarriors in service today are graduates of his techniques for turning civilians into warriors—techniques which have changed little since the days of Caesar's legions.

The Apprentice's Lament

Oh, it's up in the morn before the lo - cal sun

And it's forty clicks'till breakfast, then a simulator run

Then a wallow in the 'Mech drek with the 'Mech tech gang

Oh, what joy to be ap - prenticed to old Death's Head Vang

Chorus—

Left, Right! Left! Right! Weapons up, Close in tight!

Left! Right! Left! Right! Rockets armed, pre-pare to fight!

When you've traced that faulty circuit and you think you might be through,
Then it's muster for inspection with full kits and weapons, too!
Then you wish that you were dead; you say you'd really rather hang
Than to be a 'Mech apprentice to old Death's Head Vang!

Left! Right! Left! Right!
Weapons up! Close in tight!
Left! Right! Left! Right!
Rockets armed! Prepare to fight!

Oh, in Death's Head's unit, boy, you'd better learn to shoot
'Cause if you miss the target, you'll connect with Death's Head's boot.
Then it's back to simulators and ten hours going bang
Just because you are apprenticed to old Death's Head Vang!

Left! Right! Left! Right!
Weapons up! Close in tight!
Left! Right! Left! Right!
Rockets armed! Prepare to fight!

With a horrid grinning skull's face that could make a grown 'Mech cry
A reactor for a heart and a scanner for an eye,
If he calls you up to chew you out, you'll say you'd rather hang
But you'll take it, you're apprenticed to old Death's Head Vang!

Left! Right! Left! Right!
Welcome, boy, you're in the gang!
Left! Right! Left! Right!
Warrior now for Death's Head Vang!

Untitled Poem

As tomorrow's sun rises
I must go and become one
With a mountain of steel
And barely controlled fire.
I will ride out
Like the samurai of old
To fight
And to die.

Too long has been my ride.
Too many men have fallen
Before the fire at my command.
Too long has been my ride.

Were I a farmer
I would till my fields.
Were I a fisherman
I would tend my nets.
But I am a warrior
And the way of the Warrior
Is all I know.

As tomorrow's sun rises
I must go and become one
With a mountain of steel
And barely controlled fire.
I will ride out
Like the samurai of old
To fight
And to die.

This untitled poem was written by an unknown Kurita 'MechWarrior before his death in the battle for Lasken's World. It was found, along with his katana, by Morgan Curry, an independent correspondent currently attached to Lindon's Company.

RENEGADE LEGION

INTERCEPTORTM

THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE



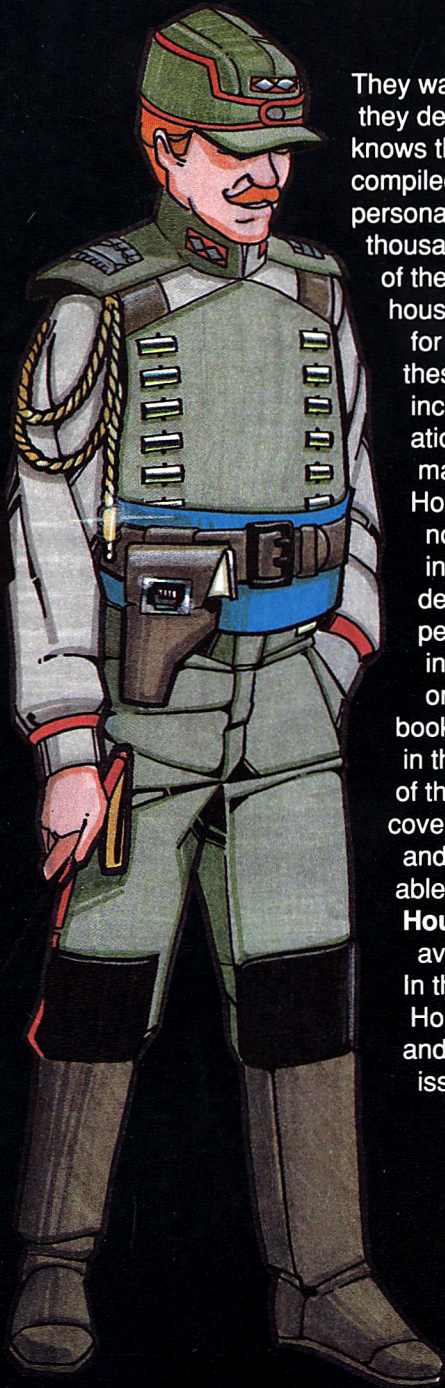
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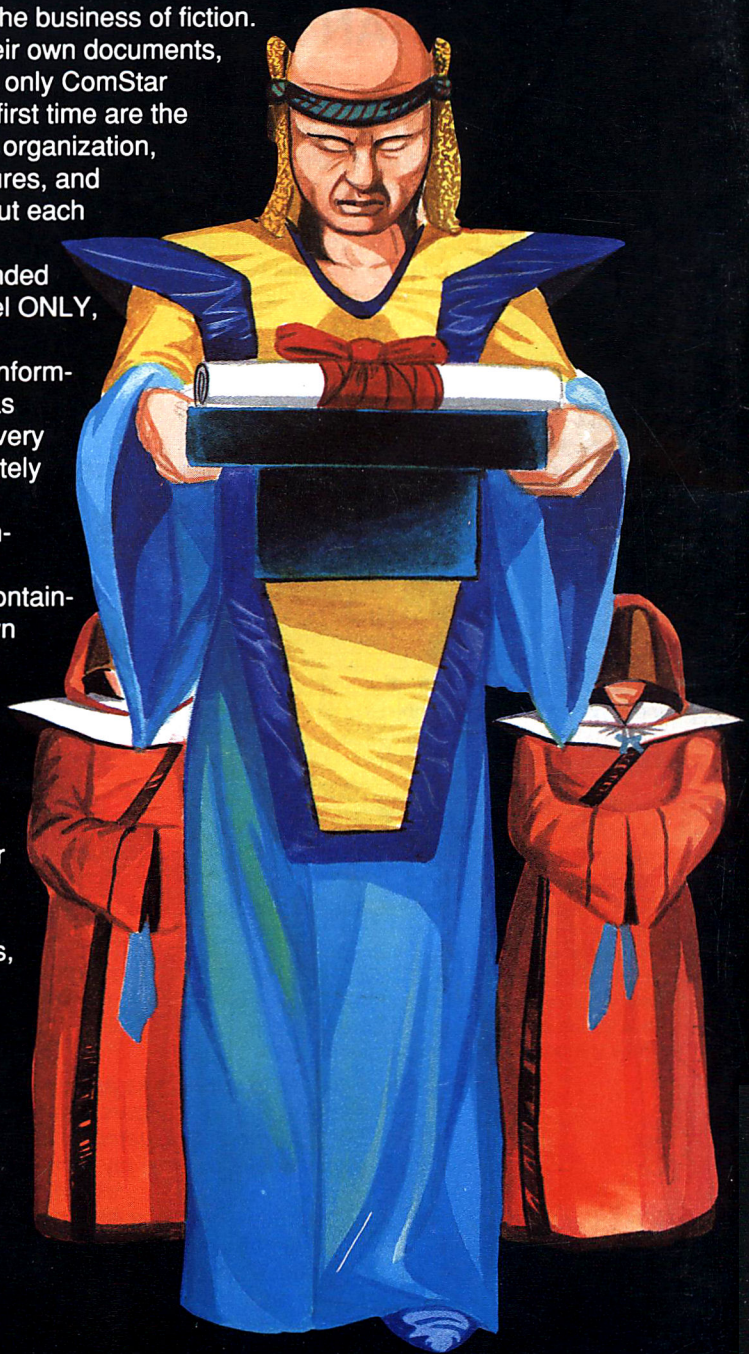
THE FACTS

ABOUT THE SUCCESSOR STATES



Colonel Steven Zaks, commander of the 12th Donegal Guards, is shown wearing the typical senior officer field uniform. Campaign bars adorn the front of flack jacket. Colonel Zaks' blue sash shows that he is graduated from the prestigious Nagelring Academy on Tharkad. As so few officers carry a riding crop, it indicates that this colonel is either young, vain, or both - a potentially disastrous combination.

ComStar is not in the business of fiction. They want facts. And in their own documents, they deal with the facts as only ComStar knows them. Here for the first time are the compiled histories, military organization, personalities, social structures, and thousands of FACTS about each of the five Successor houses. Originally intended for ComStar personnel ONLY, these works show the incredible amount of information that ComStar has managed to get on every House (but, unfortunately not how they got the information). From in-depth unit listings to personality profiles containing knowledge Known only to a few, these books are amazing in their depth. The first of these books covers **House Steiner**, and is already available. The next will cover **House Kurita** and be available soon. In the following months, Houses **Liao**, **Marik**, and **Davion** will be issued.



Pictured above are adepts of the Order of the Five Pillars. This semi-religious monastic order is devoted to preserving and enforcing the Combine's religion, ideology, and social codes which are contained in the work called the Dictum Honorium. The Order, also known as the Pillar of Ivory also controls the very important ivory trade in Kurita space. This power block is used to fund the inquisitorial mission of the Order.

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